

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

Horizon

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THE ITALIAN CHURCH AND FASCISM BY GUIDO PIOVENE

BACK TO THE SEA BY ALBERTO MORAVIA

AUTHENTIC AND FALSE IN THE NEW 'ROMANTICISM'
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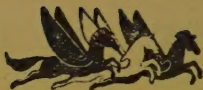
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CONTENTS

		PAGE
LAMENT FOR A LAWGIVER	<i>W. H. Auden</i>	161
CITIES BY THE SEA	<i>Dunstan Thompson</i>	163
INDEPENDENCE DAY	<i>W. J. Smith</i>	164
MONSIEUR VERDOUX	<i>Jacques B. Brunius</i>	166
THE ITALIAN CHURCH AND FASCISM	<i>Guido Piovene</i>	179
BACK TO THE SEA	<i>Alberto Moravia</i>	190
AUTHENTIC AND FALSE IN THE NEW 'ROMANTICISM'	<i>Geoffrey Grigson</i>	203
STUDIES IN GENIUS: IV—HĀFIZ	<i>Ann K. S. Lambton</i>	214
SELECTED NOTICE:		
CUBISM AND JUAN GRIS	<i>Benedict Nicolson</i>	225

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W. H. AUDEN

LAMENT FOR A LAWGIVER

Sob, heavy world,
Sob as you spin
Mantled in mist, remote from the happy:
The washerwomen have wailed all night,
The disconsolate clocks are crying together,
And the bells toll and toll
For tall Agrippa who touched the sky:
Shut is that shining eye
Which enlightened the lampless and lifted up
The flat and foundering, reformed the weeds
Into civil cereals and sobered the bulls;
Away the cylinder seal,
The didactic digit and dreaded voice
Which imposed peace on the pullulating
Primordial mess. Mourn for him now,
Our lost dad,
Our colossal father.
For seven cycles
For seven years
Past vice and virtue, surviving both,
Through pluvial periods, paroxysms
Of wind and wet, through whirlpools of heat,
And comas of deadly cold,
On an old white horse, an ugly nag,
In his faithful youth he followed
The black ball as it bowled downhill
On the spotted spirit's spiral journey,
Its purgative path to that point of rest
Where longing leaves it, and saw

Shimmering in the shade the shrine of gold,
The magical marvel no man dare touch,
Between the towers the tree of life
And the well of wishes
The waters of joy.

Then he harrowed hell,
Healed the abyss
Of torpid instinct and trifling flux,
Laundered it, lighted it, made it lovable with
Cathedrals and theories; thanks to him
Brisker smells abet us,
Cleaner clouds accost our vision
And honest sounds our ears.
For he ignored the Nightmares and annexed their
ranges,
Put the clawing Chimaeras in cold storage,
Berated the Riddle till it roared and fled,
Won the Battle of Whispers,
Stopped the Stupids, stormed into
The Fumblers' Forts, confined the Sulky
To their drab ditches and drove the Crashing
Bores to their bogs,
Their beastly moor.
In the high heavens,
The ageless places,
The gods are wringing their great worn hands
For their watchman is away, their world-engine
Creaking and cracking. Conjured no more
By his master music to wed
Their truths to times, the Eternal Objects
Drift about in a daze:
O the lepers are loose in Lombard Street,
The rents are rising in the river basins,
The insects are angry. Who will dust
The cobwebbed kingdoms now?

For our lawgiver lies below his people,
Bigger bones of a better kind,
Unwarped by their weight, as white limestone
Under green grass,
The grass that fades.

Reprinted from *The Age of Anxiety, A Baroque Eclogue* published in America by Random House and to be published here by Faber & Faber.

DUNSTAN THOMPSON

THE CITIES BY THE SEA

I

At Tyre and Sidon, and along the long Phoenician coast,
Driving in sunlight by the sea, the sunlight on the sea
A colour nowhere seen in poetry, but in the East
Easy to say, for there the values vary as the sea,
We saw the shoreline cities in their ruination dressed
Like risen shipwrecks, all their gear and tackle by the sea
Suppressed, and all their oyster glory merged with anchor rust,
Held in remembrance only by that antique antic sea,
Which seemed in sunlight more historic than the moon, and lost
In as deep reflection, for we heard voices from the sea
Mourning across the sand, like sound of singing from poor cast
Aways, or tolling bells far down the meditative sea.

II

Time in the watered moonlight floats
On the dead becalmed like fishing boats.
Salt laved mosaics, scenes submarine,
Gold heads garnished by electric green,
Over them all the eel-grass grows.
Do those lips beseem the tidal rose?
Lights up that eye for the pole star?
These metaphors like oceans are
Implausible. Here lie the dead,
Children forever gone to bed.

HORIZON

Now they are dreamers, gods who wear
 Nightly the gay archaic stare
 Of statues, smile at seeing where
 They are. The garlands in their hair
 No colder than the water stair,
 Or the waves washing all night there,
 Or the moonlit lonely ocean air.
 Being beautiful, being rare,
 Nothing concerns them in the prayer
 They paid themselves, out of passion here.

Still there is silence, still the slow
 Sift of sand. The dune flowers blow
 Over the shattered flowers of stone.
 Sometimes a coin, or small piece of bone
 Shines back at the moon. And when the wind
 Falls, the shadows come untwined.
 Along the wandering of the waves
 Acanthus leaves deck boatmen's graves,
 And in the swinging ebb-flow tide
 A king's tall column rolls aside.

III

We are far now from those Sundered cities, which in our lives
 Mattered only a moment, sanded beside their flowering sea,
 But what we remember, the broken golden stone, receives
 The sunlight, unforsaken by that recollected sea,
 And always, a distant sail, the silver sea gull moves
 In circles, and the low white coast half circles the pale sea.

W. J. SMITH

INDEPENDENCE DAY

For S.H. in his melancholia.

Life is inadequate, but there are many real
 Things of beauty here: the flower-peddler's cart
 Adrift like an island in the city streets,
 The peddler's mare, lifting her mighty hoof

Aware of all that beauty. And the slate

Where the schoolboy draws his forty-eight
States, ready to make room for the world.

The sea's enormous wealth, societies
Commemorating blizzards in the north, the small
White birds in the south where trees are tall
And the hoopsnake bounces downhill like a wagon-wheel.

There are real things of beauty; all

These things were yours. The shadowy
And fabulous quality of the imaginary

Is presumed; we know it shall
One day take the world. Now the sea
Has but poor mimic in the shell; a bell
Must free itself of sound, must break with freedom
To be free. And so you broke, and so you waved
Farewell to us, and turned away
To a mirror of completion and of certainty,
To clocks that tick, and have no time to tell.

Poems are praise, and poems cannot end.

There is no answer for we do not ask.

Upon a cliff of sadness the trees bend
Strangely towards the sea; the end
Is in oneself. O our unsuffering, suffering
Sick friend, so life is adequate

And you are whole? There are real things of beauty

Here; and sorrow is our praise. The day
Is bright, the cloud bank white with gulls.

And while we lie, and watch the ocean roll,
The wind, an Indian paint-brush, sweeps the sky.

W. J. Smith is a young American poet who, after serving in the Far East, is now a Rhodes scholar at Wadham College, Oxford. Dunstan Thompson, author of *Poems* (Secker & Warburg, 1946), was educated at Harvard and is now living in England.

JACQUES B. BRUNIUS

MONSIEUR VERDOUX

AT the moment of writing, I have seen *Monsieur Verdoux* only twice. A few years from now, when I have seen it a dozen times, I shall be able to speak less superficially. One should be very indulgent with critics who have written, are writing, and will write, so much drivel about Chaplin: they are invited to a single Press show, and are then expected to give a hasty but final opinion on what has taken the author a whole lifetime to conceive and several years to beget.

The average spectator is more diffident. For the second time, as I walked up the gangway after the words 'The End', I saw rows of engrossed people. If you had asked what they thought about it they would not have said very much, and yet I would stake my little finger-nail that they were thinking. They had not the lively eye of people who have just seen an amusing film and at once start reminding each other of the funny parts, nor the torpid expression bequeathed by a drama or by one of those films that are like a dream.

If in fact they were, as I believe, turning it over in their minds, they were grappling with a little problem, simple in appearance, but most complex to solve, for not merely the contradictions in the film and its author are involved, but those inherent in each spectator: 'Am I for Monsieur Verdoux or for society that sends him to the guillotine?' A question immediately joined by another: 'And incidentally which side does Chaplin mean us to take?'

For Chaplin, who has never hesitated to leave a door open to several contradictory interpretations of his meaning—a fact his commentators have turned to good account—had yet never carried ambiguity so far, whether from choice or necessity remains to be seen.

What is most disconcerting in this ambiguity is that one is not immediately aware of it. Most of the critics who did not even suspect its presence, charged headlong into the trap, haphazardly pouncing on some sentence or other in the film as being significant of Chaplin's 'message'. Realizing dimly that they might just

as well have noted as typical some other no less striking but absolutely contradictory aphorism, they wriggled out of it by declaring in unison that *Monsieur Verdoux* was an admirable work of art of course just as one expected naturally, but that Chaplin's philosophy was 'woolly' and, in short, of no importance. In that case one might ask where Chaplin's 'art' can possibly lie, for the choice of so scabrous a theme and the means he has used to conjure from it what he terms 'a comedy of murders' can be justified only in so far as he makes us take sides now with, now against, the little murderous bank-clerk, and I cannot see how you can appreciate the art if you refuse to be a party to the contradictions of the character. If you laugh when he brings off a murder or bungles it, if, as Chaplin has intended, you are moved for an instant by the enchanting criminal he shows us, you thereby admit that you identify yourself with him or with his victim, perhaps with both, and you are *ipso facto* caught up in his game and his train of thought. There is no escaping this: if you were not touched his art failed, so far as you are concerned at least, and in proclaiming him a genius or a great artist you are merely uttering a conventional truism. If, on the other hand, you were touched, he has succeeded in putting his problem to you. Efforts to dissociate his 'art' from his 'philosophy' are the usual attempts to retreat from embarrassing questions. As for deciding whether his art surpasses his philosophy, whether his philosophy is lifted above itself and broadened by his art, that is another matter. Nevertheless, this art would not exist without the intentions underlying it.

Your answer to this, I suppose, will be: 'I admire the art with which Chaplin puts his problem, and am willing to acknowledge its existence: but I do not resolve it as he does, or at any rate, I do not adopt his conclusions.' And that is where I have you on the hip. In *Monsieur Verdoux* Chaplin offers neither solution nor conclusion, nor even, properly speaking, a philosophy. He contents himself with a demonstration by the absurd that *your* philosophy, *your* solutions, *your* conclusions, if pushed to their logical end, are woolly and indefensible, and there it is that the shoe pinches, where it pinches us all, or nearly all.

But before this can be recognized, a misunderstanding must be cleared up, or is it rather a smoke-screen deliberately laid by Chaplin himself? For months past rumours, news, publicity, have been dinned into our ears that Chaplin had abandoned his

character of Charlie. This is a very important point, because no one would have thought of taking so seriously words coming from the queer little ragamuffin whose very life and gestures created a world of his own, reassuring because of its apparent difference from the world we live in. When Chaplin used his character of the comic tramp to speak seriously to the world at the end of *The Great Dictator*, he perfectly realized that a jump so contrived from one plane to another considerably bewildered the spectator. He got away with it by the brilliance of his acting, and because the subject of his speech stung a topical wound on the raw. But this was a tight-rope exercise—ten years from now, perhaps, no one will catch its meaning—and he did not see fit to pursue it. This time he is Monsieur Verdoux, who leads his life as a murderer, emitting a number of maxims that everyone tries to accept as gold or reject as dross, but that we take seriously because the actor-author now seems to move in the same world or society as ourselves. Has Chaplin then really abandoned his character?

On seeing the film for the first time, I had to divest myself of this assumption. No doubt he has changed his clothes and his haircut, he no longer has his bowler-hat or moustache, his cane or his old boots. But that does not prove anything, for several reasons. In the first place he disguised himself in many of his old films: as a rich carouser, a parson, even as a girl by shaving off his moustache (*A Woman*, Essanay, 1915) without changing his character for all that. And then for thirty-three years everyone has had the opportunity of realizing that the character he created was not merely made with props, that beneath it was a man, a man of unique genius, as it is a commonplace to say, a man bent on expressing himself, knowing exactly what to say and how to say it, and exceptionally determined on repeating it in every key until he should be heard. The rags he has laid aside today have been adopted by countless imitators trying to launch themselves in films or music-hall, but neither the moustache nor the string holding up their trousers could endow them with talent. Not for an instant did Chaplin feel himself despoiled of his personage.

Here then is Monsieur Henri Verdoux, antique dealer, in a pale grey suit, wing collar and check waistcoat, a flower in his buttonhole, hat on at a jaunty angle, and an elegant waxed

moustache. Here is Captain Bonheur in a blue yachting jacket with brass buttons, just in from Port Said or elsewhere, his ship in dry-dock. Here is Monsieur Floray, an engineer home from Indo-China, still fresh as a daisy in spite of his grey curls, well plastered down. Here is Monsieur Varnay, explorer, who as a widower tends the roses in his villa garden on the Riviera, while at the end of a path a miniature crematorium belches smoke, indecently animal-black, considering the domestic rubbish it is supposed to be burning.

Well, I recognized him at once in spite of all his borrowed personalities. Monsieur Verdoux, alias Varnay, alias Floray, alias Bonheur, alias Charlie, alias Lord Helpus, alias Count de Bean or Count de Ha Ha, was born in Easy Street in the shadow of a gigantic moustachioed ne'er-do-well. In his youth he slept in waste spaces, behind palings, put a horse-shoe in his boxing-glove, ogled Mabel Normand in defiance of a ferocious husband, played the violin for Edna Purviance, made a fortune in Alaska, rubbed off his shoe-leather pretty well everywhere. I can even remember seeing him in *Sunnyside* (1919) taking great pains to imitate the city masher who was wooing Edna Purviance, beauty of the village. He did not succeed in those days, but everything comes in time. Or, if you like, it's the other way round: if, when Monsieur Verdoux lost his job as a bank-clerk, he had not clung to respectability, he would have sunk lower and lower until he became a little tramp with no roof over his head, constantly preoccupied with preserving his dignity. Still not convinced? There are enough clues.

Monsieur Varnay cuts his roses with the same delicacy as Charlie Chaplin in *A Night Out* (Essanay, 1915). He presents them to his future conquest with all the grace of Charlie offering a lily to mollify the foreman Mack Swain in *Pay Day* (1922).

Monsieur Varnay, when paying his addresses to the rich Madame Grosnay (Isobel Elsom) topples out of the window as Charlie toppled over the bannisters in *His Favourite Pastime* (Keystone, 1914), and as he fell out of a window while gazing at Edna in *A Night Out*.

Lydia Floray, the only woman who is killed during the film, is the same harpy he was married to already in *The Rounders* (1914), and in many other films. Thelma, whose smoke it was we saw, belonged to a family of the same breed.

His wife, Mona, the only one he loves (unless it is pity), and for whose well-being he kills and robs, is a cripple, in the same bath-chair that he pushed in *His New Profession* (1914). The invalids he used to laugh at have become his sole objects of tenderness, but would he ever have bothered to laugh at them if he had not seen them as touching?

Monsieur Varnay delicately removes a caterpillar from his path to avoid crushing it, he buys food for a stray cat. In *The Champion* (1915) Charlie shared his last sausage with a bulldog.

Monsieur Verdoux twice hides the dressmaker's dummy with the same modest gesture as Charlie undressing a dummy in *A Woman*.

Monsieur Varnay, when Madame Grosnay at last encourages his advances, overcome by his own ardour falls off the sofa without upsetting his cup of tea, just like Charlie in *Shanghaied* (1915) when he carried the dinner-tray in spite of the ship's pitching.

Captain Bonheur in the boat, trying to put a rope with a huge stone at the end of it round Annabella Bonheur's neck (Martha Raye), and assuming an innocent, smiling air when she turns round: why, we have seen him before in *The Floorwalker* (Mutual, 1916), and elsewhere.

Monsieur Verdoux counting bank-notes with prodigious speed, or racing through the telephone directory with the same gesture of an experienced bank-clerk? In *Behind the Screen* (Mutual, 1916) he imitated a barber's movements when he gave a scalp-massage to the bearskin. He showed the same dexterity in eating an old shoe as if it were chicken and spaghetti, in *The Gold Rush*.

His marriage with Madame Grosnay, prevented by the presence of one of his wives, Martha Raye's huge and vulgar laugh peeling like thunder from every side, the attack of stomach-cramps as an excuse to double up and hide—all this seems to be the continuation of the fashionable party in *The Adventurer* (1917) when Charlie, an escaped jailbird, had to hide to avoid being convicted of imposture.

The flask of poison labelled Hydrogen Peroxide, exchanged by the housemaid by mistake, and the ensuing *quid pro quo*, is the same story as in *Love, Cruel Love* (1914), when Charlie wanted to poison himself for unrequited passion, and his servant changed the bottle.

There is even a sentimental flower-girl in *Monsieur Verdoux* as in *City Lights* (1931).

During the trial, when the prosecutor declares, indicating Monsieur Verdoux: 'Gentlemen of the Jury, you have before you a monster, look at him . . .', Monsieur Verdoux turns to look for the monster behind him. He has learnt from experience at last: in *The Cure* (1917) he took Eric Campbell's wink for himself when it was meant for Edna, and Georgia Hale's smile in *The Goldrush* (1925) was for an enormous tough coming in behind him.

Nor is it the first time that he is urged to repent by a priest. He had already had dealings with an evangelical mission in *Easy Street* (1916), and in *Police* (1916) the worthy man attempting to bring him back to the narrow path picked the pockets of a drunk. We already knew from these two films that he has little faith in reforming delinquents.

And when at last he goes off to the guillotine after a final show of bravado, it is impossible not to be reminded of his setting out towards the horizon in *The Tramp* (1915), and *The Circus* (1928).

At the end of *The Pilgrim* (1925) too, Charlie was going away: astride the frontier, one foot in the realm of law and order, the other on the side where crime and disorder reigned. The essential difference is that from now on Monsieur Verdoux realizes that law, disorder and crime are all on the same side, may even be hand in glove. In *The Kid* (1921), as in *Sunnyside*, Charlie had dreamed that all men were angels. Monsieur Verdoux is almost sure they are all fiends.

In order to face this contradiction, Chaplin now has to split himself in two. To Monsieur Verdoux, symbol of this painful discovery, he opposes Marilyn Nash, who like him reads Schopenhauer but still believes in happiness and love. Marilyn Nash, the young woman with a tender, candid gaze, lit up with youth, who is just out of prison and has neither money nor shelter when Verdoux finds her in a doorway one rainy night; on whom he is going to try out the poison that leaves no trace, but reprieves because she had loved a young crippled husband and had just lost him—I wonder how it was that you failed to recognize Marilyn Nash: she is Charlie the tramp. Hidden under her crumpled mackintosh she has a stray kitten, just as he once had a fox-terrier hidden in his trousers. When he leaves her in the street she looks

after him with the same lost expression as Charlie had worn for Edna or Georgia.

So Verdoux is indeed Charlie, but at the same time his opposite, his complement, his double, his twin brother, what you will. And in Marilyn Nash, whom he spares, Verdoux recognizes Charlie, only too well, as he runs away from that self.

Not merely has Chaplin not abandoned his character, he has assembled the scattered elements to complete and enrich it, and one might say, almost without paradox, that the film nearest *Monsieur Verdoux* is Chaplin's first film for Keystone, the title of which oddly and marvellously suits Verdoux's activities: *Making a Living* (1914). To 'make a living' the Chaplin of those days, who had not yet assumed the guise of the famous tramp, fleeced the man whose wife he was courting. Nor must it be forgotten that this is not the first time our hero has been brilliantly successful with women. It had happened already, in a dream, it is true, when dressed in a bowler hat and animal skins, in the Stone Age, he wielded a club, knocked down the head man, and trampled on a carpet of prehistoric female adorers (*His Prehistoric Past*, 1914). A dream realized at last by Monsieur Verdoux. A more consistent train of thought could hardly be displayed.

Of course if one absolutely insists on taking Monsieur Verdoux for one of the realistic characters fashionable in the cinema today, one must be prepared to understand nothing at all. This dogmatic faith in realism alleges that the more a character resembles one particular person that one might know, and one only, the more real it is. This is the quintessence of abstraction. And why should Chaplin care about abstract characters? What interest him are mythical, allegoric, composite characters, that is to say universally true and perfectly concrete, because they are everyone at once though they cannot be identified with any one person.

What Chaplin is pleased to call 'a comedy of murders' is no character-study, and it is no use attempting to discover a psychological analysis of a given murderer, in given circumstances. The examples of Thomas Wainwright and Landru mentioned by Chaplin himself should not pull the wool over our eyes. Verdoux is to Landru and Wainwright what Bluebeard is to Henry VIII or Gilles de Rais, a mythical representation. The circumstances could hardly be more fictive. Though the story takes place in France no effort has been made to create a French atmosphere,



MONSIEUR VERDOUX . . . he buys food for the stray cat. In *The Champion* Charlie shared his last sausage with a bulldog



We do not want Verdoux to kill her, we should even like him to satisfy her at last . . .



Lydia Floray is the same harpy he was married to already in *The Rounders* . . .



... a sentimental flower girl in *Monsieur Verdoux*, as in *City Lights* ...



Under how it was that you failed to recognize Marilyn Nash. She is Charlie the tramp . .



. . I remember him in *Sunnyside*, taking great pains to imitate the city masher. He did
succeed in those days, but everything comes in time

apart from names and shop-signs. This was a piece of mischief that did not take in American spectators and critics, who felt themselves personally attacked. The time of the film is exactly indicated by the dates of Verdoux's birth and death, by allusions to the economic crisis, Fascism and war; but the clothes, for instance, are outside time and fashion. In fact, the society in which Verdoux lives is never shown us at all: it is portrayed and described by him and through him.

This is where the course run from Charlie to Verdoux may be measured. Charlie had been cynical or sentimental according to different periods but he was always an intruder in a world whose ends and manners he did not understand, a world that in return would not admit his individualism, and consequently repressed or banished him. He symbolized the inadapted, and Verdoux is the same, though he has adapted himself, or at least believes he has succeeded in doing so. His pursuits have become much more reprehensible from the point of view of morals and the law, but it is exactly the same bitterness that, instead of prompting him to steal hot-dogs, leads him to murder his wives as soon as he can induce them to draw their savings out of the bank. Coming from the moralist that Chaplin has always been, this retort of individual excess to the excesses of society is not surprising, but the situation is by no means as simple as this, and the point must be examined rather more closely.

Charlie was never a character as easy to define and circumscribe as some have wanted to believe. Like all mythical personages he shows us countless facets, and it is inadequate merely to assign him different periods, as his biographers are fond of doing: the Mack Sennett slapstick with Keystone in 1914: then a slowing-up and the creation of a rather more attractive character in the Essanay series of 1915, and then in the Mutual series in 1916 and 1917; until he evolved the tender, wily tramp in First National's longer films from 1918 to 1922, and in the big United Artist films from 1923 on. One had only to observe him closely to see that the tramp's urbanity was subject to many setbacks, and that his passivity would suddenly yield to incredible fits of aggressiveness, apparent or underhand. But whatever the permanent complexity of the character, one may say on the whole that Charlie had settled on a personality with a tender heart, that the tramp might have had no education or culture, but at least he

showed predispositions that placed him above the rabble of police and outlaws that he came across. He suffered from poverty more than others did, and whenever he found himself in the midst of well-to-do people his naturally aristocratic feelings contrasted with their vulgarity. He was out of place in any class of society, and there could be no solution for him but on its fringe, in the exile of vagrancy.

There alone chance occasionally allowed him to satisfy his nostalgic taste for a human relationship based on gentleness and affinity. One was astonished sometimes that he did not become a rebel, a revolutionary. But in making a place for himself in society even if it had only been to fight it, he would have abandoned his allegoric status and his ironic mission in life of being the perpetual hair in the soup and bull in the china-shop. He was not there to open hostilities against society, but innocently to burst the bubble of its absurdity. The conflict between Charlie and the world, though inevitable, remained embryonic, fluctuating, accidental. He was not an enemy important enough to eliminate: a few months in prison here and there would do. Sometimes luck would even smile on him and enrich him for a moment. At bottom, society not merely tolerated him, it scarcely paid attention to him as long as he stuck to the wise precaution of turning a street corner whenever a policeman appeared.

It was between *City Lights* (1931) and *Modern Times* (1936), that a notable change occurred. The dates are significant. It was not Charlie who had changed, but the world. The tramp tried to gain admittance into a society that had become too wide-awake to tolerate tramps, so he signed on as a factory-hand. Open conflict flared up between the idealist and the social and industrial mechanism, it will be remembered with what cruelty. But still there was no rebellion, and it was quite by accident that he was arrested during a demonstration he had no part in. Finally, without proposing a solution—it was not for him to preach—he set out for the unknown beyond the horizon. But this time—was it already the beginning of a duality that was to prove necessary, or was it because love might be a solution?—he did not go alone: Paulette Goddard, his feminine counterpart, went with him.

With *The Dictator* the conflict suddenly reached its climax. Chaplin managed to preserve the character of his tramp only with

great difficulty, and only by identifying him with a whole community of outcasts. This time, in fact, he had a job and his place in society, and was on the fringe simply as a Jew. It had become clear that the myth of the tramp was no longer in accordance with present needs. The splitting in two was accomplished by a subterfuge: the exact resemblance between the Dictator and the barber. Though circumstances justified it, this dichotomy was nevertheless too crude a device to use again.

This is why, with Verdoux, we come to a far more subtle formula. Monsieur Verdoux is no rebel: that would be too simple. Nor is he one who can be held responsible for oppression. Sick of being driven from pillar to post at the whim of good luck or bad, he has established himself at the very heart of evil. In a world no longer merely indifferent, but implacable, cruel, inhuman, murderous, he has decided to carve his place at last by becoming a murderer, by methodically practising to remain indifferent, cruel, implacable, inhuman. Yet he is not a sadist (once again, there is no question here of a psychological analysis); he is very kind to children, animals, roses, and even to his victims themselves, when their rapacity and vulgarity do not disgust him too much. He is still his old self then, except that in adopting the methods of a world he condemns to get rich at its expense, he has allowed society with all its vices to permeate him. Instead of splitting himself into good and evil, he embodies both and represents, at one and the same time, Charlie and society. Whence the necessity of the tramp's fleeting likeness to Marilyn. Whence the small importance the film gives to the world outside. For the conflict is no longer exterior, but interior. Verdoux versus Verdoux. He feels neither pleasure nor remorse in crime because he symbolizes in a single person the world's lack of conscience. He is a living demonstration, by the absurd, of our collective wickedness and folly, of the folly and wickedness of us all, who individually are capable of being reasonable or kind. This subtle interplay, changing as shot-silk, is only made possible thanks to such ambiguity. Whatever Verdoux says is always right and wrong at the same time.

What is misleading is that this mythical creature, this satyr, half *petit-bourgeois*, half modern-world, naturally shows us human features as do Œdipus or Don Quixote, Don Juan or Dorian Gray. 'Don't pull the cat's tail, Peter,' says Verdoux to his little boy, 'you have a cruel streak in you—I don't know where you get

it . . . Always remember, violence begets violence.' With all his meticulousness, he is not even an infallible murderer. Martha Raye's vulgarity, her vitality and luck, frustrate his plans, force him into burlesque situations, and finally lead him to his downfall. In choosing as a partner the phrenetic personage of Martha Raye, chartered nymphomaniac with a well-established character, Chaplin has perhaps brought off his *tour de force* in ambiguity. Martha, that fine armful of a girl, buxom, good-natured, avid and shameless, is infinitely endearing, and not only do we not want Verdoux to kill her, we should even like him to satisfy her at last, to grant her the pleasures Mischa Auer and others have always refused her. And yet we are not much afraid for her: she dominates Verdoux with all her ardent blood, all her animal rhythm. If she were to be chopped into small pieces each fragment would begin to cut capers, dance, sing, desire. But in making her rich Chaplin has rubbed the bloom off her vulgarity, and has made her ugly as well. So we find ourselves hoping that he may at last succeed in getting rid of so cumbrous and coarse a creature, and he makes us accessory to his abortive attempts to murder her. We no longer know whether to take sides with Martha the life-principle, or with Verdoux the death-principle. I should like to point out to those who consider *Monsieur Verdoux* a film of extreme pessimism, that it is the life-principle that triumphs.

And at the end, vanquished, or rather weary, for having become in a way superhuman, he cannot really be vanquished, Monsieur Verdoux allows himself to be arrested and sentenced to death. Only then does he raise his voice to accuse the world. So far he has been content with saying in a detached manner: 'business is a ruthless business', or 'Munitions? That's what I should have gone into.' Now he is more specific: 'One murder makes a criminal, millions make a hero . . . numbers sanctify . . .', ' . . . as a mass killer I'm an amateur'. And then: 'Good and evil, too much of either will destroy us all.' And to the man who objects that too much good cannot harm us, he replies: 'How do we know? We have never had enough.' He greets the priest in his cell: 'Ah, Father, what can I do for you? . . . what would you do without sin? . . . who knows what ultimate purpose it serves?' And to the phrase, 'May God have mercy on your soul', he still finds a retort: 'Why shouldn't He? After all, it belongs to Him.' For he has ended by seeing

himself as somehow divine, a god in whom good and evil are mingled.

Any attempt to probe every meaning and intention of the film, to judge or brush aside the 'philosophy' of its author, by contenting oneself with these quotations alone, is confused and laughable. Every reply and every situation should be examined in the light of the fluidity and ambivalence of the characters. And, each time, it will be seen that as soon as Verdoux opens his mouth he both justifies and condemns himself.

Nothing can be more inconsistent, in any case, than to point out with a superior air how bad an excuse is made for a murderer by the irony of these remarks. That their irony is embarrassing for many is in no way affected by the fact that they issue from the mouth of a murderer. And besides, where did anyone get the idea that Chaplin was attempting to excuse murder, when if anything was clear and unequivocal, it was that he is bent on denouncing it? Henri Verdoux's very failure establishes the inanity of individual competition. Marilyn the tramp is finally more successful, mistress of a munitions king yet less defiled than Verdoux by the corruption of society. And so the ambiguity persists to the end, and never, in the midst of these paradoxes, does Chaplin lose sight of his purpose, which is not to take the defence of a particular case, but to defend mankind in general by showing us, one after another, with careless gesture, humanity's aberrations, concentrated here in the fate of one little honey-tongued bank-clerk. Monsieur Verdoux is the most modern possible personage in 1948, and it is to put us off the scent a little that Chaplin makes him die in 1937. Monsieur Verdoux lives in the same world as the young airman, civilized, of decent family and upbringing, who before dropping a diabolical toy on to civilian populations baptized his machine with the name of his mother; a world in which there is still no question of deciding whether some consumer goods or other might not help relieve some famine, but whether—if they really cannot serve political ends—they would be better burned or cast into the sea (which by now is becoming rather dated), or given to pigs (better still, and more fashionable).

Just after seeing *Monsieur Verdoux* I bought an album by the American humorist Charles Addams, whose drawings in the *New Yorker* have long been my delight. On the cover one sees a gigantic scaffolding at the summit of which, all ready to go, is a huge

interplanetary rocket. Two by two, mounting the spiral gangway leading up to the machine, are all the animals in creation. No caption is beneath it, but for a moment this atomic Noah's Ark appeared to me as the image lacking at the end of *Monsieur Verdoux* to bring it to its logical conclusion. And then I thought of the moments when the little man was moved to tenderness, or when he laughed at himself. He meant to say, in spite of everything: as long as you can count on love and on humour, you must not entirely despair of mankind. No such implicit confidence could be made but at the price of that lack of conclusion, of solution, that has been the hallmark of each of his films.

It has been said that the difference between wit and humour lies in this: that wit, a faculty for perceiving superficial connections between things that escape other people, amusingly expresses a personal view of its author in a *finished* form: whereas humour demands the *complementary* participation of him to whom it is addressed. Though this distinction far from exhausts the definition of humour, it has the merit of recognizing the *social and economic* functions of the two activities. The witty word (or gesture), a *finished* product, is destined to dazzle an audience—however stupid or intelligent—at once and then to sink into the oblivion of consummation. Humour remains the *eternally unfinished* object of a perpetual exchange, in which all those, and only those, who are sensitive to it can share. It must be added that taking part in humour may equally well be passive, indeed is more often passive than active, for receptivity to humour, the 'sense' of humour, does not necessarily imply a gift for humorous invention and repartee. If this were not so it would be impossible to explain the wide response evoked by certain manifestations of humour, Chaplin's in particular. His latest follows in the footsteps of Swift's *Modest Proposal*, de Quincey's *On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts*, sparks struck by Lacenaire, and a few other sinister jokes rich in meaning.

[Translated by MARY KESTEVEN]

GUIDO PIOVENE

THE ITALIAN CHURCH AND FASCISM¹

THE response which was shown to Fascism by an impressive proportion of the Italian people and the dominion held over them by the Catholic Church are certainly subjects worthy of simultaneous examination. This is the immediate and almost intuitive conclusion reached by any observer. In my opinion, it would not be accurate, however, to say that the Catholic Church made use of Italian Fascism—as of an extraneous power—to gain advantages from it in accordance with her habitual predilection for compromise. The roots of the alliance in question are of a deeper and less incidental nature. Italian Fascism is itself a Catholic phenomenon; it is born of just those vices and morbid tendencies on which the Catholic Church in Italy erects her power—should indeed be regarded as a political offshoot characteristic of our age of Catholicism. In the days of the ‘*Risorgimento*’ our best minds were conscious of one clear truth—that a political rehabilitation in Italy could only be achieved by going to the root of the evil, that is, by drawing the cultural forces of the country together in a movement to limit the local influence of the Church. The main-spring of their politics was anticlericalism. Unfortunately it appears today that their teaching has been lost. Expediency in politics, the daily valuation of conflicting forces, the fear of social capsize among Right-Wing elements, the need among Leftists to evoke response not only from the merits but also from the frailties of the masses, an accumulation—in short—of speculation, of mental reserve and of short-sighted caution induce the majorities to forgive the enormous hand which the Catholic Church had in Fascism and to take refuge, as usual, behind an intellectual pretext, ‘Anticlericalism is no longer the fashion’. In this way everyone, or almost everyone, in Italy comes indirectly to terms with Fascism, whose age goes far beyond the brief historic term between 1922 and 1943. The danger is that the master-mould, which has remained intact, shall produce new phenomena which, though they may not be Fascism in its recent, historical form,

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will resemble it utterly in intention and effect. Before proceeding we must examine those fundamental defects in the Italian people which, in our view, the Church nurtures and from which Fascism rose.

It must seem strange to say what follows of a nation which has seen its cities burnt, its families reduced by prostitution, hunger and disease as the outcome of a war which ended in catastrophe: but the Italian people have reaped all this from their ruling obsession—that of doing away with suffering altogether. Their main effort has been directed, over a notable period, towards detaching themselves from history. This is regardless of whether such an attitude may ultimately cost them tears, sweat and blood in greater measure than would an acceptance of the part which history holds for them; herein lies their most deep-rooted instinct. It is common knowledge that to refuse—whether through laziness, fear or for convenience—to take a lucid decision almost invariably engenders consequences more distressing to ourselves, and indeed to our egoism, than to show courage about it in the first place; *we*, nevertheless, choose the weaker path because of our aversion to suffering. All that has been thought and said in Italy for years past has shown the prevailing purpose of by-passing a history for which too much suffering is demanded. Italy would appear, during this time, to have been employing all her intelligence in a wasteful, laborious and morbid intent not of making an entry into the stream of history but of securing her exemption from it for all time. The most revealing phrase of Mussolini's career was uttered by him after Italy's late entry into the war—'History has got us by the throat'. It is the cry of a man, and of a nation, taken in a trap unawares.

It would be redundant to state that the Italian people are richly endowed with intelligence. What one may rather ask is why so much intelligence makes so small a mark in the world? The reason is that, if there is an abundance of intelligence, little of it is of the honest—therefore free and efficacious—variety. There is instead a wanton deployment of a defensive, utilitarian intelligence directed by egoism, self-pity and a fear of life. These are evident in the country's literature, art and in all spheres of thought. When in contact with the live currents of modern culture, to which occasionally and briefly it abandons itself, the live and ready intelligence of the Italian comes awake. But it comes awake

in order to neutralize those currents and promptly sets about finding an exit—an activity, this, which in the long run may exact a harder struggle and a greater waste of ingenuity than would their absorption in a simpler spirit. And this ritual naturally has to be embellished with the weeds of grandiose illusions and ambitions, faith in perpetual values, love of the supreme synthesis, a highly conciliatory spirit, breadth, balance, style, tradition, restraint. And in this way their culture claims universality and idealism; but it is ‘idealism’ of a practical sort; it is a masked opportunism. Above all it is a defence of one’s comforts.

Our political life follows roughly the same bent. Italian Fascism, which differed greatly from its German counterpart, was nothing more or less than self-pity and fear of living. The tide of politics looked as if they would force Italy, in spite of herself, to enter the course of history; she reacted with unhearing stubbornness as one who prefers humiliation to the thrust of will-power required to sever a ‘collage’. This threat to their fear of living (masquerading as the pleasure, or indeed the art, of living) appeared to the Italians in the form of a compulsion to ‘live’ their ‘politics’. Irreligious and obstinate in the face of history, the Italian people loathe any political trends which have as their motto ‘*la politique d’abord*’. To live one’s politics means above all to be prepared to suffer; it may involve not only abortive experiments, internal conflict, thorny problems concerned with relationship between the classes, but also the compulsion to exercise free choice as well as the impossibility of not exercising it (an apprehension lest even to stand aside should be interpreted as the preferment of a choice, involving a personal danger); or the anguished sensation that, of the thousand possible consequences of one’s every act, a few may turn out to one’s personal disadvantage. The Italian ideal of life is a safe one, conducted in privacy—another vice for which a mask of virtue is found, in the form of ‘kind heartedness’, ‘wisdom’, ‘practicability’, ‘love of the family’. Hence the reason why the Italian people, *sibi et paucis amicis*, rid themselves not merely of this or that kind of politics but of politics as a whole, relegating the entire business to a single person who, in exchange, relieved them absolutely of the risks inherent in the exercise of choice. Even if the image was an illusion, Mussolini appeared to the vast majority of Italians in the vestments of a wise priest.

But it would be a mistake to think of the Italian people as openly reactionary. They are too restless for that; too cunning and inquisitive, anxious to be 'modern', transported to placing an excessive—almost exclusive—valuation upon their intelligence. An Italian is not gladly an open reactionary, if only from intellectual vanity or from fear of seeing himself surpassed. Besides, even being a reactionary has its risks; it calls for strength of character, obduracy, courage to withstand the unsavoury feeling of being 'outside reality' and the even more unsavoury impression of this 'reality' scraping away, day by day, at the foundations of one's life. No; attitudes of this kind, at once stolid and heroic, are not for our breed. It seeks a continuous compromise between its intelligence, of which it is inordinately vain, and its lack of courage: it would like to step outside the flow of history while pretending to itself that, of all nations, it is the most deeply involved. This, once again, can be seen in the sphere of culture. No one could deny that Italian culture is of the most cosmopolitan kind, as is shown by its love of all things foreign; or that, during Fascism itself, it not only gave the most assiduous attention to all movements outside the country but tried also, in its own way, to appropriate and assimilate all it surveyed. No culture is readier than ours to produce so-called 'vanguard' movements, and a few of our intellectuals establish a convenient livelihood on the reputation of 'vanguard leaders' for life. Unfortunately the absorption by our culture of those vital trends has generally as its purpose to devitalize them, to develop out of its own resources a narcotic antidote to the power which any given movement may have of causing us annoyance. The result is that which strikes certain foreigners—a varied, motive and coruscating cultural landscape which, surveyed in its entirety, smells of stagnation. The same, we must repeat, happens in politics. In addition to security, the Italian mentality demands a further narcotic or sop to its intelligence and astuteness; it clamours for mock revolution. Recent Italian history is compound of make-believe deeds of valour and painless revolutions; and these, in time, lead to the worst sorts of suffering which, coming without the consent of those who experience them, are without value. One is reminded of those novels where the author, through the medium of his characters and from a comfortable attitude of chronic crisis, analyses and accuses himself and seems to have been caught up by a ceaseless delirium of

clarity; and all this he does with a view not to self-correction but to preserving himself exactly as he is. The Italians are indeed notorious for making the crudest confessions, which unfailingly please their intellectual vanity but at the same time they are almost incapable of repentance or of transmutation. The seductive effect on our people of Fascism lay precisely in its offer to satisfy two contrasting needs at once—to bring revolution and reaction at one blow. Mussolini's offer to Italy was of a painless revolution, free of any element of risk, unlikely to disturb the order of things—one which would lull to sleep any conflicts between interests and ideas and would not upset private life and the art of living. By placing our people out of history's reach and (at least so everyone believed) out of danger's too, he showed his understanding of their most deep-seated instinct; and this more intimately still when he unfolded before them a history which was all rhetoric, and painted imaginary dangers.

A last feature which should be touched on briefly here and which most easily escapes the observation of a foreigner is that the Italian people, at least as regards their intellectual side, are profoundly neurotic. It is the penalty paid for an equivocal life, for the unnerving effort at sustained compromise between intelligence and cowardice. The Italian knows only two paths open to him. The first is self-dedication to a mainly physical existence, stripped of problems and of ideas, where he need aim only at his own survival and well-being, accompanied by that natural goodness and ineffectual sentimentality which foreigners so like (and this is the path chosen by the majority of our nation which is, to its own detriment, one of the most good-natured in the world). The other is the path which the intellectuals are forced to take—that of chronic neurosis sapping their energies and leaving them emasculate and self-centred. That explains why foreigners are heard to say of Italy that the *popolo* is charming and the intellectual classes unsavoury. Well, we know to what a state of depletion one can be condemned by living in perpetual bad faith and in a double life, consequences both of anxiety and cowardice. We know how emaciating the laborious and empty call upon one's intelligence day after day can be, for the upkeep of a compromise; the daily quest of new justifications, brilliant and unconvincing—the more brilliant the less convincing—in defence of cowardice and her natural accomplice, subtlety. The Italian intellectuals,

compelled as they are to drift from one state of bad faith to another, are a subtle, sophistic and neurotic class; failing always, by reason of inward cowardice, to overcome the deadlocks which it encounters, it appears to be afflicted beneath all its subtlety with chronic infantilism; it is a class of adult and suffering school children who can only keep going over and over their childhood's ailments. They are forever burning themselves up over the same political, social, psychological and sexual problems into which they sink more hopelessly as time passes, never deciding to assume the risk of a clear and energetic solution. Their penalty is a state of ill-being, of bad conscience, painful and fruitless intellectual travail, febrile agitation and restless morbidity.

This is a fleeting and, needless to say, imperfect diagnosis of the ills which beset the Italian people and which seem to proceed almost invariably from the principal one, cowardice. It is a people who seem to have forgotten the teaching of their own Dante that every fruitful undertaking has its beginning in an act of courage, in a victory over cowardice. Fascism, a passing phenomenon, was the product of their ailments; but these continue today to draw their sustenance at deeper level in the religious and political conduct of the Catholic Church, the phenomenon of centuries.

It is a fact that, during Fascism's twenty or so years in Italy, Church and Fascists cohabited most closely and, in many instances, were partners in the conduct of the country's life. Their intimacy began to crack only when Fascism appeared defeated. Fascism calculated that a '*rapprochement*' with the Church could be useful; the Church believed it useful to exploit the Fascist calculation to obtain, where necessary, the support of the lay arm. But a deeper and more genuine explanation rested in the exact similarity between their aims and needs. First of all, a glance at the essence of the two institutions. Mock revolution, with the object of keeping alive—for their exploitation—all the conflicting defects in the Italians, was employed by the Church in the Counter-reformation; Fascism merely followed up her precedents and may therefore be considered a 'counter-reformist' phenomenon. Indeed, it would be an error to think of the Counter-reformation as a movement openly reactionary to the Reformation. The description of 'revolutionary' was merely a pretentious claim made on its behalf. The Counter-reformation attempted to absorb

and to assimilate all the religious features of the Reformation with a view to rendering them ineffective; it emanated new, monastic orders of battle; it preached austerity, as the Reformation had done. Its position was the same as that of Fascism *vis-à-vis* genuinely revolutionary movements whose very vocabulary it feigned to absorb and rendered sterile by transplantation to refractory soil. The Church could not but countenance a conservatism dressed up as a typically Counter-reformist revolution on the ecclesiastic model. It tallied in every detail with her example.

It would be of no purpose to pause here over an abundant documentation of their collaboration, which was minute and thorough and which we all remember so clearly. I shall touch on two examples only.

The first is concerned with the agreement in their censure of, and hostility towards, intellectuals. The moralistic restrictions which Fascism imposed on us (when, for instance, it forbade that characters in novels should commit suicide or adultery, or be taken in unnatural vice or generally in anything which could be interpreted as 'unwholesome') sprung simultaneously from the Fascist creed and from the advice of the Church. If occasionally conflict threatened, it was only that a bargain might be struck. About the year 1930 a book about Christ, by Piero Martinetti, was published. It is, to this day, one of the most profound studies of Christ's teachings taken back to their original form and purged of later superimpositions. The book was banned and, in exchange, the archbishopric of Milan authorized an illumination by candle-light in Piazza del Duomo in honour of one of Mussolini's visits. One Ernesto Buonaiuti, having abandoned the Church, was deprived by the Fascist regime of his chair in the university and, in return, the Church relinquished some of her surviving political aspirations for the Catholic youth movements. These things should be more widely known. It should be added that Fascism struck voluntarily at these men and would have done so without the Church. They were too much alike ever to be seriously at variance.

The second point is marriage. Church and Fascism were equally interested in perpetuating the characteristic immorality of Italian marriages, calling pretexts to their aid of safeguarding health and morals. They both required bewildered men—men without initiative or pride in private life and in their domestic anguish.

Thanks to the Church and her political allies we have domestic conditions in Italy which are truly disastrous; they sap a great part of the energy to think. From a survey which I examined I drew the conclusion that thirty per cent of Italian marriages are in desperate need of dissolution. It is one of the hypocritical illusions of Italy that she is morally sound and that other countries, such as France for instance, are havens of licence. In reality, domestic relations are nowhere more torpid, insincere and dishonest than in Italy. Here the family, which ought to be a source of strength to society, has become a social mire. It is the centre of double lives, of constant unfaithfulness and deceit, of masked rancour and of secret revenge. The life of societies is corroded at the roots by this permanent school of ill-faith. Between the walls of their homes Italians overburden their nerves and become adepts in cowardice and disloyalty.

These fragmentary remarks enable me to touch, amongst the many reasons which made Fascism acceptable to the Church, on one which seems to me to be of first importance. It is in the supreme interest of the Catholic Church that men should be without ideas, avoiding every sort of political, religious and moral problem in order to concentrate their whole attention on their private affairs, and so remain in a neurosis. Absence of ideas induces morbidity and suffering, and from these the Church also profits. It is, for instance, of importance to the Church that men should remain shackled, swamped by the problem of sex. She is forever harping upon it, makes it indeed the centre of her preaching; and in this she is not mistaken, for it is precisely there her strength lies. Indeed, if a man can outgrow this problem and enter the free and adult life of thought, he is almost certainly lost to the Church. But the man who cannot consort with ideas because he is enmeshed in sensuality, in imaginary conflicts and in the pseudo ideas which proceed from these, finishes nearly always as her easy prey. The Church will always do her utmost to ensure that the sexual problem shall remain our chief obsession. Herself the medium of our neurosis, she requires men's neuroses which, keeping them occupied in a constant act as it were of stanching, fixed upon themselves with the egocentricity of the diseased, not only deny them access to thought-processes but make them avid of alternative consolations. Men in bad faith, cowards, the timid towards life, *poseurs*, egoists, sure victims of neurosis who are too

anguished and self-absorbed to aspire to any kind of liberation—these are the grain of which the Church today kneads her bread; she gathers in the fruits of their cowardice and of their fear. Neither the flights nor the visions inspired by faith, but only our failures, are of profit to the Church. Sufficient proof can be found in Italy's Catholic literature. Weak and ambiguous spirits see in Catholicism the dispenser of nourishment to their ill-being and they seek with metaphysical justifications to perpetuate it under her protection. On the fertile, sentimental Catholic soil they discover monuments to their flabbiness, duplicity and complications, casuistry and a continual dualism which give no clue to the dissipation of their afflictions but only point to a sure way to keeping them wrapped and insoluble. Catholic thought has, by this time, gone over not merely to the rôle of passive absorption of the *mals du siècle*—of the diseases of the conscience which find in her a convenient stanching-rag—but also to a complacent proclamation that these are delicate, incurable, eternal. The Church lives on our neuroses and, particularly in Italy, on the neurosis of Italian bad faith. Herself always ready to tyrannize, she is the friend of other tyrannies so long as they do not rise against *her*, principally because tyranny makes a man sick and complacent in his own ills. The disease and insincerity of which every tyranny is fruitful are rich in *nuances*, complications, blurred issues which an honest mind ignores. Under tyranny, neurosis is in love with itself and its own false riches. The Church gathers in not only the fruits of the disease itself but those of the anguished love with which it seeks to defend itself.

We can therefore begin to draw some conclusions. The Church, as she operates in Italy, is seen to be interwoven with the most pernicious vices of the Italian people and these, in turn, will never throw them off as long as her influence extends over them. Further, she was in intimate collaboration with Fascism, and for two main reasons. As the Church has always been, so was Fascism a conservative force, but not conservative in the accepted sense merely; Fascism was also a 'devitalizer' of the more advanced political and social forces, which it rendered ineffective by drawing them over to its side, against its conservative background, under the screen of a sham revolution. And then because she, too, profits by the condition of neurosis which tyranny perpetuates by placing politics and the struggle of ideas beyond men's reach,

turning them into egoists, walling them up within themselves. Having lost all trace of her positive power today, the Church thrives, in effect, upon our fatigue, our anxiety and our egoism.

Today, Fascism having fallen, the Church is there to carry on her work in Italy. Her rôle is still that of a conservative force; she continues, to the best of her ability, to conceal the fact. She continues to assimilate reformist and living doctrines, keeping her conservative principles intact all the while; thus she condemns those doctrines to anaemia and death and again gives Italy the illusion that she is accomplishing a reform which costs no pain. Italian conservatism and ancient Italian astuteness are decanted today into Catholic 'reformism' just as formerly they were decanted into the Fascist 'revolution'. Men who still join forces with the Church are daily more imposed upon by those same conservative powers which attracted them to her. She is defended with stock-in-trade arguments of Catholic pessimism, on which Fascism was also erected, drawn from the Italians' mistrust of their own strength and from a negative assessment of our religious and moral resources. Her 'wisdom and her millennial experience', say her defenders, hold us back from all rash adventures which we are not capable of completing and from those flights of thought and of action which are unmatched to our incontinence and our scanty social cohesion. Exactly thus was Fascism's justification of itself; as much as by our neuroses, the Church profits by ancient Italian pessimism which she alone has disseminated. Even those Italian Catholics who give the Church their vote reward her duplicity with theirs. If their support of the Church were sincere it should be their wish that her dominion extend without hindrance over the souls of men and the conduct of their lives; since true faith does not admit the half-measures which are tolerated by partial, self-interested and sentimental adherences. But every living Catholic would be horrified at the thought of the Church assuming total control of social life without the mitigating effect of other influences. He would have powers granted her sufficient to vouchsafe his own freedom from more radical adventures, but simultaneously cultivates opposing forces whose mission, whether overtly or through muted channels, is to moderate her power. Catholics are well aware to what limitless extent the Church would develop her tyranny, by virtue of her constitution, if she were to find herself unopposed. It is sufficient

to glance through the Catholic press to see how ready, particularly on intellectual and moral questions, is its claim to a place on the political platform whenever a voice is raised there against its special interests. The criticism which Catholic papers now publish, interwoven with moral and confessional allusions or falsely draped in rational and aesthetic motives, concerning the work of any artist or thinker; their petulant and aggressive tone, their constant demand for 'measures' against dissidents, can leave little doubt about our fate if the ecclesiastic power gained predominance. The Catholics are themselves awake to it; and so we have the curious spectacle of so-called religious men at pains to ration out the use of the secular arm to their Church, allowing her as much of it as shall suit their comfort—but not so much as to give free rein to her pretensions.

The Catholic Church, today even, is propagating the type of conservatism in Italy which is most attractive to our people, who ask for subdued reforms whose course is blinkered and whose outcome is guaranteed; who ask to stay away from history whilst simulating to take part in it, never to suffer in action but, if it must be, then passively, in order to return finally to where they started. This Church endorses the current defence that only a 'wise' policy, mistrustful of innovations and tinct with a police system, can suit our scant collective sense of responsibility for the catastrophe which has overtaken us and for our own sufferings; she tends, in other words, to further to her own advantage all the vices of which the Italian people need to be freed most urgently. It should be stated at once that it is untrue that the Italian people have suffered very intensely (I mean consciously and from choice); their sufferings have swept over them as hail on a field. This nation has yet to suffer truly, consciously and dangerously, if it wants a place in that history which it has sought, so far, to escape. The alternatives are not 'death or survival', but life *in* history or *outside* it. Life in history is its only legitimate choice. If its character is too weak for this, it is justice that, as a nation, it should perish. It is incomprehensible why certain protective cures are being dispensed, aiming to prolong a condition of inferiority and offering, as sole reward, a promise of an almost exclusively physical survival outside the course of history. They resemble the cures of certain mothers who, having a son doubtfully fitted for survival, keep him shut indoors (without noticing the injustice of

their action; since the only just course would be to drive him out and see whether he shall become a man, or break). If any nation is in need of useful, conscious suffering, it is the Italian, having sought so far only to evade it by developing an art of *savoir-vivre* which does not spare us any of our evils but teaches us to patch them as best we may. But to attain to this it is indispensable, at least, to eliminate from its political life the influence of a Church which fattens on its oldest ailments.

The function of intellectuals in Italy today has vast scope. Free, nonconformist and courageous spirits (of whom, it may be admitted, there are some) who are not corroded by the neurotic ill-faith peculiar to their class, can have one function only—to inject into the people the qualities of which they stand in greatest need: sincerity and courage. It is their task, regardless of the promptings of any immediate political tactics in hand, to resume the anticlericalism bequeathed to us by the great men of the Risorgimento. Italy is in need today of a body of moralists who are prepared to make their armour of intellectual courage and clarity of vision and of word. Above all they must abandon the practice, to which they are invited from all sides, of magnifying the Italian people, or a particular section of them, making merits of their defects, praising passivity, acquiescence, egoism and a predisposition to give in for the avoidance of suffering, which have penetrated to a considerable depth even in the populace. The Italian intellectual's duty today is to be pitiless. Only by striking hard at them, who undoubtedly are a great people, can he give a genuine sign of his love for them.

[Translated by FRANCIS DUNBAR MARSHALL]

ALBERTO MORAVIA BACK TO THE SEA

THE countryside was flat with great meadows over which the daisies scattered their soft whiteness far and wide. On the horizon the pinewood closed in the meadows with a long unbroken wall of solid and motionless greenery. The car proceeded slowly, and as though unwillingly, jolting over the holes in the unpaved road. Through the glass of the windscreen Lorenzo could see the mass of the pinewood coming to meet him, as if it were moving—

melancholy, mysterious, hostile. Lorenzo had planned this outing as a way of sweetening his relationship with his wife. But now, confronted by her solid silence, timidity again overcame him. However, as they approached the pines he said: 'Here is the pinewood.'

His wife didn't answer. He lifted his hand and adjusted the mirror over the windscreen. As they were setting out he had turned it towards her and during the drive he had done nothing but observe her. She had sat firm and erect, her gloved hand on the door, her coat folded on her knees, her white linen shirt open as far as her breast. Her slender neck rose up out of the shirt like a graceful stem. On her sunburnt face and red mouth her freckles and the soft down of her lip set a veil of shadowy sensuality. But her eyes, small and black, gazed ahead obstinately, and the upward sweep of hair over her forehead gave her whole face an aggressive and hard look. She had something simian about her, Lorenzo thought; not so much in her features as in her sad, decrepit and innocent expression, like that of certain small apes. And like an ape she pretended to an attitude of offended dignity which he knew she was entirely incapable of.

The pinewood was near now and appeared less dense than from a distance, with red trunks leaning this way and that as though they were just going to fall against each other. The car left the road and went over a stretch of bare, soft ground over which the wheels bounded gently. The pinewood was deserted; here and there, in the shadow, was an uninhabited chalet, with closed shutters. Then the wood brightened, the air appeared white and trembling; the sea.

Lorenzo would have liked to announce the sea as he had announced the wood; but his wife's silence seemed even more determined, and she wouldn't be able to resist the temptation to snub him—the sight of the sea caused him such genuine delight. So he remained silent and drove over the bare soil. The car stopped and for a moment they sat motionless in the shadow of the lowered hood. They couldn't see the sea in detail yet but they could hear it, now the engine was turned off, with its varied and diffused murmur in which each wave seemed to have a different tone. 'Shall we get out?' he suggested at last.

His wife opened the door and put out her legs, hindered by the narrowness of her skirt. Lorenzo followed and closed the door.

Immediately they felt the sea wind which was strong and warm and fierce, lifting clouds of sand and dust from the rough ground.

‘Shall we go down to the sea?’

‘Yes, of course.’

They set out across the clearing. The bombardments had ruined much of the promenade; there were wide gaps here and there in the cement paving. There were still a few pillars standing; others had been thrown down and were gradually being covered with sand which the wind blew in long tongues as far as the middle of the clearing. As they set their eyes towards the beach they saw that it was criss-crossed in every direction by barbed-wire entanglements. The wind blew under the barbed wire, smoothing out the sand. Far away the thorny threads of steel stretched, wrapped in a white and furious cloud of dust.

They found a way marked out by poles which led through the barbed wire to the sea. Lorenzo let his wife go ahead and followed at some distance behind. He did this so as to look at her with leisure as he had done earlier in the mirror of the car. When he had finished his manoeuvre he reflected that perhaps the most unfortunate part of all his misfortunes was his tardy and unforeseen falling in love with his wife. He had not loved her at first, he had married her in a hurry so as to prepare himself for his political career. And now that the empty and noisy luck which had dazzled him for so many years had come to an end, he had fallen in love with her—but she had no use for his love. Or rather, a sort of pungent lust had been kindled in his blood, which was shy and gauche, like a youth’s love. As he followed her he watched her with a sad and surly desire that amazed him. She was tall, thin, elegant, boyish; and when her long strong legs, robust in relation to the thinness of her bust, moved clumsily over the uneven sand, they recalled the legs of very young horses still awkward in gait. Lorenzo looked especially at those legs on which innumerable hairs could be seen through the transparency of her stockings; hairs, black and long, which looked as though they had been stuck on to the skin and were supine and lifeless. She didn’t have them plucked as many women do. When she put up her hand to arrange her hair, disordered by the wind, he seemed to make out the blackness of her armpit through the linen shirt and he felt deeply uneasy.

They reached the sea. Offshore the wind was pushing up long

and sonorous springtime billows, rolling one upon the other; but farther out the sea was almost calm with alternating streaks of turbid green and dark violet. For a while Lorenzo stood beside his wife, looking at the waves. He picked out one as far away as his eyes could see, in fact at its birth, and then followed it as it rose, overturned on the rump of the one ahead of it, and passed on beyond it. As the wave lingered, lost its way in the ebb and died at his feet, his glance leapt back to the sea in search of another. He didn't know why, but he wanted at least one of those innumerable masses of water breaking on the shore to overcome its hindering rivals and the slowing-down impact of the backwash; to hurl itself on to the shore, pass beyond himself and his wife, mount the beach and wreath in its farthest foam the barbed-wire defences and the clearing. But it was a vain wish and suddenly he understood why he wanted it so much. As a child, on stormy days, he loved to watch the varied impetus of the waves and now and again, when he saw a bigger and stronger one spread quickly up the beach as far as the cabins, he used to think ambitiously: 'I shall be like that wave.' He shook his head vigorously to banish the recollection, and, turning to his wife, he asked her: 'Do you like it?'

'The sea?' she said indifferently. 'It's not the first time I've seen it, you know.'

Lorenzo would have liked to explain his feelings, yes, to tell her about his childish imaginings; but a sort of hopeless timidity prevented him from speaking. He felt a strong impulse to free himself from his preoccupation and at least seem carefree. He bent down and picked up a stone so as to throw it as far as he possibly could. He counted on the violence of the action to cast away his pain together with the stone. But the stone was deceptive. It was as big as his fist but light; it was pumice and porous with holes. It fell near, floated on the crest of a wave and grounded in the sand at his feet. He experienced a feeling of bitterness as though this was the silent answer given by reality to his aspirations. His suffering, too, was like that pumice-stone and he hadn't the strength to cast it far away; it would always come back with the jetsam and black debris that the rough sea vomited on to the shore.

He came closer to his wife and put his arm round her. He wanted to walk with her along the sea's edge in the health-giving wind that blew against them, in the clamorous solitude of the

waves breaking on the shore. But she pushed him away, startled and stubborn. 'What's the matter with you?'

'Don't you want us to go for a walk?'

'It's too windy.'

'I like the wind,' he said. And alone he took a few steps along the shore. He felt he was behaving desperately, outside the calculations of reason, like a madman. And this sense of madness was increased by the crashing of the waves and by the wind blowing into his hair, his eyes. 'I've completely lost my head,' he thought coolly, and he started to go towards a little heap of sand which had been formed round some abandoned and rusty object.

'What are you doing?' he heard his wife ask angrily. 'Where are you going? There are mines about.'

'What do I care about mines,' he answered with a shrug. He would have liked to add, 'or if I'm blown up,' but he was silent out of modesty. He turned to see what his wife was doing. She was still standing facing the sea, looking bored and undecided. Then she said: 'Don't play the hero; you know you want to live,' with a contempt which wounded him and seemed unfair. He turned back with a leap and took her arm. 'You must believe me when I say that now at this moment I don't care a fig about dying; in fact, I'd be glad.' He squeezed her round firm arm tightly and noticed with pain how easily the contact turned his despair into desire and made it insincere in spite of himself. She looked at him and said crossly: 'Leave me alone . . . it's your usual tale . . . and then . . .' Then, after a moment, 'Do what you want, but I won't follow you. I haven't the slightest wish to die myself.'

Lorenzo left her and went purposefully towards the little mound. His feet sank, his shoes filled with sand. The mound was no more than fifty yards away; he reached it and discovered it was an old petrol tin. The sea had corroded and rusted it and the wind had three-quarters filled it with sand. Beyond, the beach stretched on as far as the eye could see, swept by the grazing wind, traversed by fine black barbed-wire entanglements which looked like closed up scars in the soft whiteness of the sand. He stopped a moment, undecided, dazzled by the reflection of the cloudy sky, and then turned back.

His wife was no longer there. Lorenzo picked his way through a narrow passage between the barbed wire towards the clearing. His wife was standing by the car, one hand on the door, the other

on her forehead so as to set her hair. 'And now what are we going to do?' she asked.

'Shall we eat?' he replied in a cheerful voice, though really he felt hardly capable of speaking let alone being cheerful.

'Where?'

'We can go into the pinewood.' Without waiting for a reply he took the basket of provisions from the back of the car and set out in the direction of the pines. His wife followed him.

They crossed the clearing towards the remains of what had once been the local restaurant. In the white dusty light the half-buried ruins rose from the convulsed ground with upright stumps—pale outside and coloured within like decayed teeth. The cement stairway leading to the main hall in which people used to eat overlooking the sea mounted one or two steps and then suddenly stopped above a hollowed-out chaos of pieces of ceiling, twisted and rusting iron and blocks of mortar and bricks. The other rooms inside the crumbled walls were recognizable from similar ruins agglomerated in one single dusty pulp. They walked round the ruins and he said: 'You remember last time we came here?'

'No.'

'Two years ago. Things were already going badly, but I didn't want to face it. You had a wisp of something round your breast and another round your waist which passed between your legs. You were very brown; you had a little turban round your head. Now,' he went on in an unexpectedly strained voice, 'I realize you are very lovely, but then it was as if I didn't see you; I was thinking only about politics, and I let all those idiots who followed us around make love to you.'

'And then?' she said drily.

'Nothing.'

Behind the restaurant was a lawn and the rough and dirty grass was all mixed up with sand. Thick bushes and twisted trees with branches extending like arms grew on the edge of this lawn. The bombardment had thrown a piece of the café piano into the middle of the lawn: the keyboard with a few white notes and a great hunk of splintered wood was exactly like an animal's jaw-bone with a few putrefying teeth. The grass all around was scattered with felt hammers. Another part of the instrument, the frame, had been hurled into the fork of a tree. The metal strings

hung from it and curled like pendant branches of an unusual creeper.

Lorenzo searched for a withdrawn spot with blind and absorbed premeditation as though the issue was not one of love but of crime. His wife followed him some way behind with a look that seemed to him increasingly discontented and jibbing. The pine-wood was full of little grassy glades surrounded unevenly by the bushes of the undergrowth. Finally, he thought he had found what he was looking for. 'Let's sit down here,' he said, and slid to the ground.

She remained standing for a moment, looking around. Then, slowly, stiffly and contemptuously, she sank on to her thighs and sat, abruptly pulling her dress over her knees. Lorenzo pretended he wasn't looking at her and began to pull the provisions out of the basket. There were lots of packets, big and small, all wrapped up carefully in white tissue paper, the kind used in fashion shops. And there was a bottle of wine.

'Was it you who packed the basket?'

'No, I got the maid to do it.'

He spread out a napkin on the grass and carefully arranged the eggs, the meat, the cheese, the fruit. Then he uncorked the bottle and put the cork back into it.

'Would you like an egg?'

'No.'

'Meat?'

'Give me a roll with a slice of meat.'

Lorenzo took one of the rolls which had already been divided and buttered, put in two slices of meat, and handed it to her. She took it fastidiously without thanking him and ate it unwillingly. With his head still down and without a glance at her, Lorenzo took a hard-boiled egg and bit at it hungrily, then filled his mouth with buttered bread. He felt a sorry kind of hunger which seemed of the same kind as his desire for his wife. Hunger and lust grew and prospered on his despair, he thought—as though he were no more than a corpse without life and will and his wants had grown on him in the way hairs grow on the beards of the dead. He ate one egg, then another, then a third, hesitated, and then ate the fourth as well. He enjoyed biting into the elastic whites and feeling the soft yolks crumbling under his teeth. He ate with emphasis and now and then put the bottle to his mouth and took

long gulps. After the eggs he turned to the meat; there were two kinds, a roast in large red slices, and cutlets fried with breadcrumbs. He didn't look at his wife but ate, and as he ate he felt turgid vitality swelling his veins though his spirit remained sad and empty. This vitality, associated with such despair, made him desolate as though it were a useless and ironical form of wealth. At last he lifted his eyes and offered her the bottle without a word. She still had her roll—she had only eaten half. She shook her head.

'Aren't you eating?'

'I'm not hungry.'

Lorenzo finished eating, then collected the eggshells and other remains, wrapped them in a piece of paper and threw them far away. He put the half-emptied bottle back in the basket. He carried out all these actions with wilful doggedness as though it were a matter of setting his own disturbed mind in order rather than the provisions. His wife, who had now finished her roll, began touching up her face with hand-mirror and puff. 'And now,' she said, 'shall we go?'

'Where?'

'Home.'

'But it's early.'

'You've seen the sea,' she said unkindly, 'you've had lunch. You don't want to sleep here, do you?'

Lorenzo watched her, not knowing whether to be infuriated or humiliated by this obstinate enmity. Then he said in a low voice:

'Listen. I've got to talk to you.'

'Talk to me? We've already talked enough.'

He slid on to the grass with an effort and sat beside her.

'I'd like to know what your grievance is.'

'I haven't one: only I don't see why we must go on living together, that's all.'

'You no longer feel any affection for me?'

'I never felt any, and less now than ever.'

'But there was a time,' Lorenzo insisted, 'when you used to throw your arms round my neck if I gave you a present or some money. You used to hug me, kiss me, and say you loved me.'

'I liked getting presents,' she said, obviously annoyed by this reminder of her childish greed, 'but I didn't love you.'

'You pretended then.'

'No, I didn't pretend exactly.' Lorenzo understood that she

was being sincere. In a woman of her kind gratitude for gifts closely resembled love: indeed perhaps it was the only love she was capable of.

'But I', he bowed his head, 'feel for you, since things have been going badly, for the first time in my life, you see. . . . I don't know how to say it.'

'For heaven's sake don't say it,' she exclaimed derisively.

'Well anyway, can't I know what you have against me?'

'Against you?' she replied, growing angry. 'I have the fact that I don't want to be the wife of a jail-bird.'

'I was only in prison a few days, and anyway it was for political reasons.'

'So you say. But others say there was something else, and . . . that you might be locked up again tomorrow.'

Lorenzo noticed a slight uncertainty in her tone, as if she were repeating hearsay instead of thinking things out for herself.

'You're talking about things you don't understand. I bet you haven't even known who I am nor what I've been doing in all these years that we've been together.'

'Don't be absurd,' she said contemptuously.

'Well then, tell me.'

'You were . . .' she hesitated. 'Well, you were one of those who were in control.'

'That's not enough. What was my office?'

'How do I know,' she said scornfully. 'All I know is that everyone referred to you as one of the authorities; but you were always changing, at one time you were one thing, at another time another. I had something else to think about than your jobs.'

'Yes,' said Lorenzo gently, 'you had to think of Rodolfo, Mario, Gianni.'

She pretended not to hear the names of her lovers—all of them as young and silly as herself. Lorenzo went on:

'At least you know what has happened since the time when I was an official? Do you?'

He saw her lift her shoulders impatiently. 'There you are, now you're taking me for a fool; I'm much more intelligent than you think.'

'I don't doubt it in the least, but tell me what has happened.'

'The war came: Fascism came to an end; that's what happened. Are you satisfied?'

'Fine. And why do you think I lost my career?'

'Because,' she said, unsure, 'now the government has been taken over by the enemies of Fascism.'

'And who are the enemies of Fascism?'

This time she lifted her eyes to heaven, tightened her lips, and said nothing. A kind of rage seized hold of Lorenzo. This ignorance, he thought, was far worse than any kind of facile condemnation. It made even his mistakes, not to mention his few merits, fall into a void; there remained no more trace of his life than of his footsteps, a little while ago, on the sand along the shore.

'What was Fascism?'

Again the same silence. Abruptly Lorenzo seized her by the arm and shook her. 'Answer, you beast, why don't you answer?'

'Leave me alone,' she said sullenly. 'I don't answer because I know you want to tie me up and make me change what I think. I don't want to stay with you any longer, that's all.'

Lorenzo was no longer listening. The contact of that arm had once again aroused his desire. He looked at her skirt stretching tightly over her thighs as she sat; the softness and warmth and weight of her flesh seemed to communicate themselves to the material. At the sight of this he felt his mind melting away and his breath catching. Nevertheless he said slowly:

'Don't you realize you're leaving me at the very time when another woman would remain faithful, and for motives you don't even see clearly, for some whim or piece of gossip?'

'I realize that many women in society don't invite me to their houses any more, nor greet me in the street. I've already warned mother that I want to go back to her. That's all; I don't want to stay with you any more.' She stood up.

Lorenzo looked her up and down. She stood erect and scornful, her legs in an ungainly attitude because of her skirt which was too tight and her heels which were too high. He realized that it would be easy to fling her to the ground, disarm her contempt. Those legs of hers, hampered by the tightness of her skirt, were like her character which was limited by her silliness. He felt a violent desire to upset her balance. With one thrust of his whole body he threw himself on her legs and toppled her over on to the grass. She fell headlong and, startled into fury, she said: 'Leave me alone. What's the matter with you?'

Lorenzo didn't answer but threw himself on her, crushing her under his body. He said: 'I am what I am,' holding his lips against hers as if he wanted to send every word into her mouth. 'But you're not really better than me; you're a silly, empty, corrupt girl; as long as it suited you you stayed with me. Well then, now it doesn't suit you any more you'll stay with me all the same.'

He saw her look of terror and then she said again, almost in supplication: 'Leave me alone.'

'I won't leave you,' said Lorenzo between his teeth. He knew, because he had proved it in the past, that his wife, for all her fury, would give way before his violence in the end. At a given moment she always seemed to be overtaken by a kind of languor or complicity with the force she was being subjected to, and then she yielded and became passively loving as though all the previous repulses had been no more than deliberate coquettishness. This was another characteristic of her silliness—the incapacity to carry any feeling, whether hostile or friendly, to its conclusion. And so, when they began struggling, she defending herself and he trying to overcome her defences, Lorenzo suddenly saw in her little innocent eyes the tempted, passive and languid look he knew so well. At the same time he felt her resistance weaken. Then she said in a low voice: 'Stop, I tell you; someone might see us.' And that was already an invitation to go on.

But he felt a sudden disgust at his victory. After all, nothing would be altered, even if she yielded. He would get up lovelessly from the body he had enjoyed; she, scornful and untidy, would pull down her crumpled skirt; and with the first words uttered their disagreement would begin again, but with the added disgust at the meaningless mechanical coupling. And it wasn't that that he had wanted when he brought her out for the day's trip.

With a brusque movement he left her and drew himself away on the grass. She sat up looking injured and deluded. 'Don't you know that violence gets you nowhere,' she said crossly.

Lorenzo felt like bursting out laughing and answering that on the contrary violence was perhaps the only thing that worked with her. But at the same time he couldn't help recognizing that what she said was true; for what he really needed violence didn't get anywhere.

Despite this he said cruelly: 'That doesn't alter the fact that if I'd gone on a bit longer you'd have opened your legs.'

'How vulgar you are,' she said with sincere disgust. She rose to her feet, clambered through the bushes and set out determinedly for the clearing.

Lorenzo stayed sitting on the ground with his eyes on the grass. When he thought over his wife's replies it seemed as though he too no longer knew what he had done or stood for all those years. 'She's right,' he thought, 'it was all an empty dream, a delirium, and now I've woken up.' As he looked back over those years he realized that he couldn't remember anything except his constant cordiality—cordiality to his inferiors, his superiors, his friends, his enemies, to strangers and to his wife. He reflected that in the end his cordiality must have had a bad effect, for after so much talking and smiling he now felt incapable of either; as if his tongue had dried up and the corners of his mouth become sore. In these conditions even an idiot like his wife found her game easy.

He jumped at the distant throb of a car, and paused a moment listening; then, suddenly suspicious, he leapt to his feet and began to run across the pinewood, leaping over the bushes and the uneven ground towards the clearing. When he arrived there, panting, it was only to find it empty. The air was still full of the dust raised by the car in which his wife had fled.

It seemed a worthy ending to the day and he didn't even feel annoyed. He could probably get a lift back on a military truck. At worst he would have to walk a mile or two to the main road; plenty of cars passed there and he could easily get a lift.

But as he set out along the path through the pinewood he felt the call of the sea, a longing to go back again to the everlasting motion, the everlasting clamour, before returning to the city. And then he wanted to do something he would never have dared to do in front of his wife—take off his shoes, roll up his trousers and walk along the sea's edge in the shallow water of the ebb and flow of the waves.

He was aware, too, that he wanted to walk along by the edge of the sea to prove to himself that he didn't care about his wife's flight. But he knew that that wasn't true, and when he sat in the sand to take off his shoes he noticed that his hands were trembling.

He removed his shoes and socks, folded his trousers up to below the knee, and picked his way through the barbed wire to the water's edge. He set out walking in the ebbing and flowing water, with shoes in hand, his head bowed and eyes lowered.

His attitude was that of thought but he wasn't really thinking. He liked seeing the surf pass beyond his feet, rise along his legs and form a whirl of water round his ankles, then flow back peevishly, carrying away the sand beneath his feet, tickling like something alive. He liked, too, to keep his gaze down and see only water to right and left, turbid, swirling, sprinkled with white rings of foam. The sea near the shore was full of a black sedge which each wave threw on to the sand and then carried away again in the backwash. There were minute sticks like ebony, oval and smooth scales, tiny wood splinters, myriads of little black objects that the movement of the turbid sand-laden water kept in continuous turmoil. The transparent shells of tiny dead crabs, green seaweed and yellow roots put some splash of colour into this carbonized chaff. When the surf ebbed the sedge clung gluttonously to his feet making an arabesque of black on their shining whiteness. Here and there some flotsam of larger bulk floated in between one wave and the next, in the ground-glass turmoil of the foamy water. He saw something not far away of uncertain colour and shape which made him think of an animal; but as he drew near, overcoming the water's pressure, he discovered that it was the wooden hoof of a woman's orthopaedic shoe. Little shells of pallid amethyst had spread thickly over the toe making a kind of dense tuft, while the heel was still covered with red cloth. As he was looking at the remains a high foamless billow passed by, rapidly bathing him as far as the groin. He threw the shoe away and turned nearer to the shore.

He didn't know how long he walked along the strand, his feet in the riotous water, on the soft and fleeting sand. But by dint of looking down at the waves which broke ceaselessly on his legs and passed beyond towards the unseen shore he felt a kind of dizziness. He lifted his eyes over the sea and for a moment he imagined he saw it tall and upright like a liquid wall. The sky on the horizon was no more than a streak of vapour. There some sea bird was skimming the skin of the water in distant and dangerous flight which revived the thought of the drunken violence of the wind. Dazed, he nearly fell under the weight of a heavier billow. And the clamour of the waves seemed suddenly to become shriller and fiercer as though redoubled by the hope of his collapse.

Almost fearfully he turned towards the beach, thinking to get out of the water and sit down for a moment on the dry sand. He

had walked a long way. He had left the clearing and the ruins far behind. Here the sand, mounted in dunes and defences, was criss-crossed by barbed wire and stumps which looked like people holding hands with arms outstretched so as to block the way. His attention was attracted by a thick bank of black and shining seaweed underneath which the waves had hollowed out the sand. He jumped as far as this seaweed and, touching the ground with one hand, he leapt on it.

The torrent of seaweed and sand which soared into the air with a thundering echo darkened his eyes to the sky for a moment as he fell back in the whirlpool of the explosion. He thought he was falling headlong for ever in a perpetual din of cataract. But silence and immobility followed. He lay supine in the water; the noise and movement of the sea were singularly sweet and distant under a sky again visible. The water pulled him under by the hair; head down and feet up, his body moved with the passage of a wave, and he saw a large red stain hastening towards the shore with the rings of foam and the black debris. Then another wave came and pulled him under and he closed his eyes.

[*Translated by* BERNARD WALL]

GEOFFREY GRIGSON

AUTHENTIC AND FALSE IN THE NEW 'ROMANTICISM'

THERE are some propositions, one supposes, to which the painter, even now would agree, off his guard. He would agree that the painter has two legs, is human; he would agree that being human is not simply being animal, being alive; that it involves reflection upon birth, life, death, love, hate, order and disorder, harmony and interruption, pleasure and pain, the known, and if not the unknowable, at least the unknown. He would agree that the painter differs from the musician or the writer only by painting out of, or more exactly, in his humanity, instead of composing or writing. But when told, for example, by André Gide or Coomaraswamy (as writers were told by Yeats) that, in fact, he

is inclined to paint nothing or very little, that he has become, in Europe, more a technician, an *artist*, a virtuoso or play-boy of means and less a devotee of ends, he may be expected to retort that writers are writers and should mind their own letters.

Yet in England the painter's uneasiness, his suspicion (if ever he has troubled to read them) that Gide and Coomaraswamy may be right—these are showing themselves in what is commonly called the new 'romanticism'.

Perhaps Mr. Clive Bell was wrong in calling Turner an after-dinner painter. Perhaps the arrangement of darkness and line in an etching by Goya does work more upon the mind than the twisting square yards of 'Guernica', after all. Perhaps Samuel Palmer and Picasso can be married (in a registry office) and have issue—a forest, or a scrub of Mr. Sutherland's thorns; though thorns, even though they have once surmounted a purple Christ fathered by Grünewald, make a dubious crop for the fertility and productivity of the land. Actual apostasy, not only from the last chalky, geometrical recollections of Mondrian, but from Picasso—even that is now possible and even profitable; none the less the new 'romantic' painter is in a dilemma, which he may not recognize. He can borrow and adapt techniques, antique and modern. He cannot validly (though invalidly he often does) borrow the false end of someone else's personality. And both these means of technique and personality are pointless without a purpose and a belief, without a true end.

Here is a first distinction between the false and not the true, but the personally authentic in the new 'romanticism'; though since the false and the authentic are so often mixed in the same painter, it would be less easy to say 'These, in alphabetical order, are the false, these the authentic romanticists'.

'Romanticism', moreover, does not fit the painting to which we apply it. It suggests some kinship to the painting of 1780 to 1840. It suggests the personal, rather than the eighteenth-century universal of common sense, the emotional rather than the intellectual, the surrender to impulse rather than the meditated progression from impulse to end. Yes. But the romantic painting of 1947 is further from the romantic painting of James Ward or Turner or Blake or Palmer than Pugin's Gothic was from medieval architecture. It is furthest of all in a difference of conception.

The romantic painter was both an inventor and an eclectic

borrowing from a diversity of predecessors, according to need and temperament—from Dürer, from Rubens, and Rembrandt, from Claude, from Raphael, from Michelangelo, from Parmegiano, from Elsheimer, etc.; but though he seems now, and indeed was, by comparison with an Italian of the Quattrocento, a painter of personal visions, he felt that the vision sprang from an impulse which was less personal than a glimpse, a sudden illumination, into a universal somewhat. He was in earnest not simply as a painter, but as a man who painted. We may see in Constable's landscapes the projection of an uneasy soul into nature, but Constable was propelled consciously in his work by a grave moral intention. In James Ward we may see a violent self-expression wrigglingly injected into a style based upon the width and exuberance of Rubens; but Ward, nevertheless, felt that prayer in the studio was an essential aid to composition, no less than Blake and Mrs. Blake when the visions failed. The romantic eclecticism was directed more by what the painter felt to be inwardly necessary, and less by the desire (as, one would guess, with painters at this time) to master a number of superficial, attractive devices. The romantic painter borrowed from those whose aims, he discerned, were akin to his own.

So, to mention two painters, John Piper and Graham Sutherland are both of their time, in different degrees, as virtuosi of means.

Both are skilled—highly skilled—explorers of technique. Both have looked with profit into the work of other living artists, of Picasso for example, and with John Piper, of Léger and Rouault and Henry Moore. Both have been moved by English romantic artists, Sutherland as the more introverted by Palmer and Blake, Piper as the painter more of surface and the extension of planes, by Cotman, the small master of the drop curtains of nature.

Yet Piper and Sutherland are not without apparent ends; which are 'romantic' and personal, though not identical. Piper acts as producer of the theatricality of nature, the scenic light and darkness. Sutherland swallows his selected world, breaks it down with his digestive acids, and exhibits the content of a spiritual stomach. His pictures are each portions, not sharply differentiated, of an endless personal mystery, running like a film intermittently visible; pictures impressive in their sharp clattering of colour and darkness, but pictures, I believe, which have been so far mostly destructive and not affirmative of life. Sutherland strives to be

European, Piper is English. Piper's landscapes are no more exportable than John Betjeman's poems could usefully be translated into Polish and circulated in Warsaw. If I enjoy them (which I do), and then criticize them, I criticize also something in myself, as a middle-class Englishman, something not to be allowed too much rule. So Piper's feeling, shared by so many of us, allows much more play of common or rather of English association. He paints a ruined house, not because it is ruined, but because it once was whole; a decaying mansion, not because it is decaying but because it symbolizes a past for which he has a nostalgia. He feeds the archaeologist's yearning for what no longer is; not Sutherland's devouring greed for the hard materials of nature. He visits Wilson's pool under Cader Idris, the Welsh waterfalls known to Girtin and Palmer, the Weathercote Cave of Turner or the Gordale Scar of James Ward; is the topographer against Sutherland's somewhere which is also everywhere and nowhere. Piper regrets, but does not destroy. Both, however, have agreed in this: they have been neither joyful artists nor artists who affirm the human possibilities of life. In his Penguin essay, Edward Sackville-West presented Sutherland trying 'to portray with the maximum of intensity—of *life*—those loved objects (stones, hedges, road shapes, dead trees, lezarded rocks)'—'of *life*'; yet those objects, which Sutherland seems to hate as much as love, are all precisely dead, dead as the rocky material on which Blake's atheistical Newton props his lean behind as he bends forward to dust and to the dividers of mensuration; and not only dead, but, as he gives them, disintegrated. How ironic then it seems that Sutherland should picture death in nature with much learning derived from a lover of the spirit in Blake and a mystical lover of the divine, through living, growing, flowering nature, in Palmer; how ironic—and a portion of the present 'romantic' falsity—to apply the means devised for purposes of love, the means elicited or controlled by love, to the picturing of death!

Two contrasts are appropriate. Piper's recordings of war destruction are in general static and scenic and unmoving. He is not, I repeat, a destructive artist. Sutherland's Devastations—'House in Wales', 'East End Street', 'Twisted Girders'—these are devastation and destruction, in essence, are accurately and powerfully horrible; are hell, which is his province, and not Heaven. In St. Matthew's Church at Northampton, Henry

Moore's affirmative tenderness of the Madonna and Child faces the twists and cruelty of Sutherland's little-headed, crucified Christ, a Christ who suggests no resurrection.

Sutherland's abstractions from his dead nature seem unnatural; just so the nooks of hell would seem unnatural to a denizen of earth. In fact neither Sutherland nor Piper is an admirable, that is, a vital draughtsman. They achieve so much as they achieve by feeling through colour and tricks of surface. Now colour, and feeling through colour, distinguished the romantics on our side of 1800; but they continued, being concerned with life even if tempted by death, to understand the probity of draughtsmanship, of that process in which the whole being of the artist, his consciousness and unconsciousness, drives down into the fine point of pencil or pen, which draws the object both as itself and as the self of the draughtsman; and as something exhibiting, in its fragmentary way, an end beyond his mere reservoir of instinctive compulsions. Piper's drawing and Sutherland's leave out the object (or substitute for it a paradigm), and include only a little more than the two selves, the dramatic nostalgic self and the self brooding around death. 'Gorse on Sea Wall'—but it is not gorse. The caption is indispensable. It is Sutherland. And it is not Palmer going out to draw hops so that their 'fruitful sentiment' may be infused within him; just as Sutherland's darknesses are not shadow sleeping upon substance, not that which Palmer called 'texture in its proper function, and shadow in its poetic sleep', but (modelled on Palmer's tender darkness:) darknesses of threat, and of damage. Both these artists appear to cut somewhat short to expressed feeling, without the disciplinary draughtsmanship which gives to the painted feeling vitality (even Blake advised Palmer to learn nature by heart, to draw something a hundred times till he possessed it); and in this they differ, as they differ in seldom making colours sing together in delight, both from Picasso and from Henry Moore; or from that artist in these last decades who most completely realized his small and delightful power, Paul Klee. Neither is enough in love. For Sutherland in particular, for this painter, who, when everything possible has been said against him is still a daring, independent and greatly talented explorer, there would nevertheless be room in a new *Romantic Agony* by Mario Praz given to painters instead of writers.

No resurrection; and an evil time. No doubt it is an evil time.

But thinking of Sutherland's pictures, the clutching trees, the thorns, the red hills, the disappearing roads, the tawny adits, the explosion—the disintegration—in quarries, the crucifixion without the women; thinking of the dead or dying, nature so unloved that the acid abstractions or semi-digestions from it have none of the structure and grain of the objects portrayed; thinking of the decayed, *limp* material pictured without the locked, nuclear energy of matter, of the shapes that sag over to the ground, of that dark, loose, demi-lunar shape in particular which he has repeated so often, one may think also of two poems.

Comus hears the Lady sing an 'enchanting ravishment' and reflects that he had often heard his mother Circe with the three Sirens

Amidst the flowry-kirtl'd *Naiades*
Culling their Potent hearbs, and baleful drugs
Who as they sang, would take the prison'd soul,
And lap it in Elysium.

But their song in madness robbed the sense of itself, while the Lady's song was 'a sacred, and home-felt delight', a 'sober certainty of waking bliss'. Most of Sutherland's paintings happen not to have the sweetness or the ravishment of the songs Comus recalled; but there are necromancer's death poems—and pictures. No doubt there is a place for them—at least in the interests of the necromancer. Yet if this is an evil time and a time of the prevalent wish for death, that is no great reason for surrendering to a deathly admiration for its expression either in language or in paint. A poem of Louis MacNeice's goes

... For the litany of doubt
From these walls comes breathing out
Till the room becomes a pit
Humming with the fear of it,
With the fear of loneliness
And uncommunicableness;
All the wires are cut, my friends
Live beyond the severed ends.
So I write these lines for you
Who have felt the death-wish too,
But your lust for life prevails—
Drinking coffee, telling tales...

Sutherland is one of those artists of our time whose lust for death, till now at least, has prevailed, an artist mentioned by

Edward Sackville-West along with Beddoes, along with a poet obsessed by decay who married death by picking the bandages off his own morbid leg. In Piper, a deft and a less remarkable artist, or at any rate an artist less rounded into himself, a nostalgic melancholy, tinged with masochism, couples with a measure of life. In Moore, death and life, cruelty and love compete against each other; though love and life (yet it has often been mere life, the *amœba's* life) are somewhat the stronger. In Moore, stone and wood rise with tension into life; in Sutherland life sinks without tension into the black death of a denatured rock and a sapless claw.

Piper and Sutherland exhibit then, in the present 'romanticism', apparent ends; but ends to which no one would attribute nobility; and exhibit that often irrelevant virtuosity of unsubordinated means which occurs—I say only *occurs*—in so many of the most able artists and writers of our time, in Picasso, in Eliot, in Pound, in Joyce.

And no doubt even so much distinction as I have allowed between technical means and apparent ends is not justified. These apparent ends are only the personal conceived as an end. So every critic who goes on talking of art as 'expression' is to be distrusted; since such art would be the exclusive expression of the personal, whereas the personal in the arts is means, no less than the paint in the tube is means; or any trick of distributing it over the surface. The personal is peculiar pigment in a larger tube; and nobility in all its degrees from the lyric to the epic, from the sketch to the Sistine Chapel, emerges in the true end fashioned out of these two pigments, or rather embodied in them. Exit otherwise the humanity of the artist.

Nevertheless, the inventive variety, and the various, inventive eclecticism of these two considerable painters are such that one could nearly divide most of the exhibitors in a mixed exhibition in Cork Street or Leicester Square into followers of Sutherland and followers of Piper. What may be said of the leaders may be said, diminutively, of many of the followers in their present stage; and there is no more point in reviewing the falsities of the new romanticism in its smaller showings than in reviewing much of that playboy art which mixes constructivist strings with Surrealist fantasy and proves tickling to the fashion papers, or much of the deliberately naïve. More pertinent it is to ask what the ends of a painter can be in our cultural earthquake.

Painters are more easily confused than writers because of the nature of the particular sense through which they work and their particular medium. A sentence is a proposition; and even if it may be a proposition of feeling, still language is the medium of common logic, which tells one how a smooth bomb is constructed or what is the penalty for pulling the communication cord. If sight has its uses of common sense, its specialized uses are more readily and by temptation confined only to the delights, fixing the personal, confined to 'expressing' the delights or the agonies, or to the transmission of various allied if opposite feelings. Neither a philosophical system nor a theory of physics is conceived in line or in pigment. So the painter is more easily content than the writer to think enough that which he is told in unison by his eyes and his feelings; and in this curtailment of his humanity he is supported by much precedent and appreciative criticism, by the record of much English painting, and by anthropological and psychological investigations into the genesis in the individual of the impulse to paint. Birth, though, is not maturity, any more than the first irritation is either the pearl or the bedeguar on the rose tree. If reason is often proved a false skin over a fester of personality, still reasoning is not impossible. And there is something ridiculous in the prolonged childhood of the painter content with the obedience of skilful hands to a sensitive couple of eyes, producing significant forms which signify only his sensibility; something to regret, also, when painters with ability follow without a struggle either dim lights or cold lights of corruption, whether those lights originate in themselves or in others. It is far better to realise, with Milton, that there are songs which rob the sense of itself and songs as delightful of a sober certainty of undrugged and waking bliss. Palmer refused to be what he called a mere naturalist, a mere selector and transcriber of pleasing scenes; but there exists also this mere naturalism in which one transcribes the personal, this mere expression of the means, in their less obvious connotation. If a painter then cannot believe in God in the activity of applying his pigments of self and out of tubes, he can still believe in man, other than that man himself. He must. It may be difficult, but we 'must love one another or die'; not masturbate, as Coomaraswamy has put it, or love ourselves to the death. There is no reason why the painter, unless he is no more than a coated film sensitive to shape and light, should evade his humanity

by holding that he has no need to think, no need—a belief held by few of the major English painters a hundred and forty years ago—to do anything but see, inwardly or outwardly, and then paint. A keen and free intellect can help a painter no less than it helps a Newton or a Planck, or helps an Auden or a Henry James. We have had enough, or should have had if we knew where our health lies, of a witless sensitivity, whether it surrenders in its own inventive, eclectic way to the uncriticized self, or whether it does the trick of Victor Pasmore and others of painting tastefully through the eyes of a party among the dead. We have had enough of the virtuoso. If poets (as many poets have urged from Byron, who thought the imaginative system or systems of his day not worth a damn, to Hopkins, Hopkins to Eliot, Eliot to Auden) need to examine Dryden, though still they decline, so painters need to examine, for example, Poussin—Poussin and thought, Poussin and organization; Poussin and the *clear distinction of one picture from another*. Poussin's twelve observations, on the four constituents of painting—subject-matter or theme, thought, structure and style—on painting as an imitation of human actions, are more than a small museum of dead precepts. Painters need order; they need subject; which is another way of affirming that they need viable ends.

Something, nevertheless, which I suggested on the first page may still seem unexplained and out of place, even a contradiction—that the new 'romanticism' and its ubiquity signify that many artists are discontented with means, or with painting either nothing, or little. The answer is that for a nothing of technical means, more or less, they are substituting a painting of themselves, objectified in ruined buildings, disintegrated rocks or dead trees, without understanding that the self is also nothing; they believe they have acquired an end, without realizing that this apparent end, this dead-alive end, is only means, after all.

Still, even this self-deception, embodied as it is in something not merely subjective or merely abstract, something as near to the tensivity of the natural world as that natural world disintegrated, may have its merit. The living tree may entice painters to itself, so to speak, since it grows alongside the procumbent, rotting trunk. Yet this new romanticism is a new provincialism. The damage it is now doing increases, naturally, with the potency of those who are leading it; and also with the extended sealing off of

country from country. Still, there are more provincialisms than one. A Parisian provincialism could be—it once threatened to be—as damaging. It would be as provincial only to take this and that in the begging bowl from Picasso, to pinch one discovery of Picasso's and another, as to modify things learnt from that magus with just so much Englishness, just so much seen in Blake, or Palmer, or Cotman. When the war came, I prophesied—(though it needed little foresight, and though I did not foresee the literally closed society in which we are living at the moment, and out of which only officials and the officially approved, only officially selected pictures and not the artists who paint them, can emerge)—an increase in painting of personal and selfishly unique mysticisms. (Though one inclines now to recall Coleridge on the mystic and the misty, or Patmore on religious enthusiasm and the 'fire-mist' of the sentimentally religious.) Painting tended a mystical or a misty way during and after the closure of England in the Napoleonic wars; and it suffered then, as the acute Mulready remarked, by being cut off from the disciplined draughtsmanship of French classicism. Still at that time the English school trusted itself immensely more, and there was more sanity of self-imposed discipline or discipline enforced, as well as prompted by the ruling culture. Moreover—and in spite of the closure of England—the traffic was then from England to France, as will sometime be made clear when, for example, Géricault's debt or Delacroix's debt to a diversity of English painters is properly investigated.

In our day one most pertinent thing which has been realized by Picasso (not of course by Picasso alone) and which can be learned from Picasso, indeed is that an infinity of sources exists (and, closure or no closure, is still available) from which one can select and enrich one's means; but the selection, backwards into the past, outward into the present, from cultures as diverse as Byzantine and Aurignacian and Mexican, is self-indulgent play without ends, and when the ends are insufficiently human. Picasso himself, with his proud powers, has scooped in too much, one might say, for human amalgamation; he is like a single man with a warehouse of the world's spices, which he has no wish to sell in his lust and need to savour them in numberless combinations. Picasso's pictures, again, merge one into another, without the distinction of those individual acts we once understood pictures to be and endeavoured to make them—merge into one like facets of a

personality or seconds out of a film. Still, in Picasso one may see this: an immense embryo of a universal painter still unborn, freed of being either a little Englander or a larger Parisian. And for Picasso in France, our nearest English counterpart is Henry Moore. Perhaps, because his appetite and virtuosity are a little less monstrous, his purposes are clearer and more realizable; so every now and then a human work of Moore's breaks out into meaning and individuation.

The virtuous objective, as no doubt Henry Moore realizes, is a wide sea embracing unity and humanity. The English neo-romantics are like the travellers up river, back to the sea, going, if they persist in the journey, off the main course and into the tributaries and under the hot selfish jungle, exciting events occurring on the way of which the reports intermittently are flashed back to Bond Street. So at last they reach into a heart of darkness; and there each mystery may well resolve itself at last—at last—into a stale puff of flatulence.

Turning, for a last comment, to the various followers either of Sutherland or of Piper, one must search in their exhibited work for the signs of lyricism *and* intelligent self-knowledge, richly pigmented self and conscientious skill within the subservience to the leading modes. It is the younger painters giving these signs who may become explicit and individual, finding real and not apparent ends. Among these, I believe that I can detect two, or even four (though I shall not name them, since the casting of horoscopes is the critic's folly) in whom love and growth may be more powerful than hate or death, who obviously disrelish the nostalgic, the art of association, and disrelish even more the art of naïvety.

In reading back through this, I realize how it can be and likely enough will be, replied that I have urged simply a moral case, for example against Sutherland. Perhaps. But what is so highly derided as moral with the wrong accent is a part—is a permeating quality—in every total; a part of the whole case in any judgement; part of the part which distinguishes white magic from black magic, against which I am not the only pleader. One must say one's say, and risking being coupled with 'reactionaries' or with the P.R.A. on 'that fellow Picasso' for whom the French 'have no use'. If it is replied again that the road to a heaven goes via hell and that a painter can only be estimated upon his completed body of work—well, these are arguments more valid in pondering immaturity. After immaturity, how long should one billet oneself in hell?

ANN K. S. LAMBTON

STUDIES IN GENIUS: IV

AN INTRODUCTION TO HĀFIZ

IN the ninth century A.D. independent or semi-independent dynasties began to establish themselves in Persia for the first time since the Arab conquest of the seventh century. About this time modern Persian began to be used as a literary language, and it was not long before a series of brilliant figures came across the Persian literary scene. Representative figures among these are the poet Firdausī, the writer of the great Persian epic, the *Book of Kings*, 'Umar Khayyām, the master of the quatrain, well known to English readers through Fitzgerald's translation, Anvarī, the panegyrist, Jalāl ud-Dīn Rūmī, the great mystic poet, whose *masnavī* is known as the *Qur'ān* in Palahvī (i.e. Persian), Sa'dī, whose poetry and prose is celebrated among his countrymen, and Hāfiz, who ranks as the greatest *ghazal* writer of Persia. Professor Arberry in his recently published book on Hāfiz¹ considers him a poet eminently worth study and believes that his technique can by modified imitation inspire new developments in Western poetry.

Hāfiz, or, to give him his full name, Khwāja Shams ud-Dīn Muhammad Hāfiz, was born in Shīrāz, the principal city of Fārs, about A.D. 1320 and died in that city in A.D. 1389 or 1390. The times in which he lived were turbulent, unsettled times. Their dominant note was insecurity and this is echoed in Hāfiz' literary works. The theme of the instability and unreliability of the world runs through his poems and he urges again and again a need for abstinence from the world, which he regards as essentially evil.

The lands of the Eastern Caliphate, of which the area occupied by modern Persia formed an important part, were overrun by the Mongols in the thirteenth century A.D. Hūlagū sacked Baghdad in A.D. 1258. Fārs had become tributary to the Mongols some two years previously. Under the Mongol Ilkhān dynasty, founded by Hūlagū, relatively stable government was for a while established and there was a period of relative economic prosperity. The Moorish traveller, Ibn Battūta, who visited Shīrāz on two occasions, the first being towards the end of the

¹Hāfiz, *Fifty Poems, Texts and Translations*: Collected, Introduced and Annotated by Arthur J. Arberry, C.U.P. 1947.

Ilkhān period, describes Shīrāz as a densely populated town. The main branch of the Ilkhāns became extinct with the death of Abū Sa'īd in A.D. 1335 and Persia became the field of struggle between rival claimants and groups, the two most important of whom were the Chūpānid family and the Jalā'irs. The disintegration of the Ilkhān kingdom facilitated the rise of local governors to independence or semi-independence. The first of these in Fārs were the Injūids; under Sharaf ud-Dīn Shāh Mahmūd Injū Fārs appears to have had considerable revenues. The Chūpānids subsequently for a brief period succeeded in establishing a dominant position in Fārs. They were succeeded by the Muzaffarids. The history of Fārs at this period largely consists of struggles for power between the local rulers with their nominal overlords, in so far as they recognized from time to time the overlordship of another ruler, and with the neighbouring rulers and governors of Yazd, Kirmān, and Isfahān, and of not infrequent internecine quarrels. The irruption of Tīmūr into Khurāsān in A.D. 1380-1 introduced a new factor into the situation and led to the recognition of Tīmūr by certain Muzaffarid princes, who thought thereby to strengthen their position *vis-à-vis* their rivals. The struggles for power went on until finally the opposition of Mansūr (A.D. 1387-1393) to Tīmūr occasioned the latter's march on Shīrāz, the fall of that city and the execution of all the Muzaffarid princes in A.D. 1393, a year or two after Hāfiz' death. This constant campaigning and the relative frequency with which cities and districts changed hands can hardly have conduced to stability or to the prosperity of the people.

Such were the times of Hāfiz. Not a great deal is known of his own life. He appears to have been a relatively poor man. He belonged probably to the religious classes. His name, Hāfiz, implies that he knew the Qur'ān by heart and was, perhaps, a professional Qur'ān reader. From his poetry it is clear that he was familiar with the Muslim sciences which were expounded and taught at that time by the religious classes. It is not improbable that he, in company with other learned men, received a pension from the ruler of Fārs. It is related that when Shāh Mansūr ascended the throne, one of his accountants, thinking to perform a service to the new ruler, reduced the pensions of the learned, but when Shāh Mansūr learnt this, he revoked the order. Hāfiz is said to have sent some verses to Shāh Mansūr on this occasion.

There is also a popular story which tells how Hāfiz met Tīmūr. This story has more foundation than the equally famous story of the boyhood friendship of 'Umar Khayyām, Nizām ul-Mulk and Hasani Sabbāh, the Grand-master of the Assassins. Its wide currency bears witness to the popularity of Hāfiz among the Persian people and the prestige to which he attained. The story is as follows: When Tīmūr took Shīrāz he sent for Hāfiz who was living the life of a poor recluse, and upbraided him for his famous ode, which begins in Gertrude Bell's translation with the lines:

Oh Turkish maid of Shīrāz! in thy hand
If thou'lt take my heart, for the mole in thy cheek
I would barter Bokhara and Samarqand.

Tīmūr asked Hāfiz how he could give away the flower of his (Tīmūr's) empire for the black mole on the face of the Shīrāzī Turk. Hāfiz, pointing to the rags in which he was dressed, replied that it was on account of such liberality that he was in the condition that he was.

During the life-time of Hāfiz various princes ruled Shīrāz, and there are many references in the collected poems of Hāfiz to contemporary rulers and their ministers. The majority of these probably refer to Shāh Shujā' who ruled intermittently from A.D. 1357-1384. Many of the Persian poets were panegyrists. They wrote to gratify the desire of their patrons to be celebrated by mention in the works of contemporary poets and received for their poems presents. Hāfiz does not fall into this class, but an examination of his poems shows that he, too, composed a not inconsiderable number of verses in honour of such patrons, upon whose rewards he was, in all probability, to some extent dependent.

Poetry, in Persia, holds a place of special eminence. It arouses in the soul of the Persian feelings which tend, perhaps, to express themselves in the West in a more direct fashion. National unity as known in the West does not exist in Persia but there would appear to be a certain unity of knowledge and way of thought in the mind of the people, which is apt from time to time to manifest itself, often in a somewhat unexpected way. The vehicle which ordinarily expresses this 'community of soul' among the Persians is poetry: hence it is that poetry has for the Persian a special and inner meaning; and it is mainly the poets who, in Persia, have been the teachers of the people. Language, moreover, has been since the

Islamic conquest, the main vehical for aesthetic expression in Persia and words exert a power over and have an appeal to the imagination of the Persian to an extent which is difficult to exaggerate.

Persian lyric poetry is closely bound up with mysticism: by the thirteenth century A.D. it had appropriated to itself the language, and, to some extent the content also, of mysticism, and during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D. there were few poets who did not use the phraseology and symbolism of mysticism. It will be convenient here, therefore, to indicate briefly the major trends in the development of Islamic mysticism, or Sūfism as it is known. In the early centuries of Islam, Sūfism was, broadly speaking, confined to asceticism and, in origin, Islamic. By the middle of the second century of the Muhammadan era seeds of the later development had already been sown and during the third and fourth centuries A.D. the ascetic element began to give way to a mystical and philosophical element, chiefly non-Islamic in origin. Asceticism came to be looked upon as a preliminary stage in the life of the mystic. Abandonment of the world and prayer were no longer the goal, but merely stages upon 'the way'. Allegorical meanings were attached to religious doctrines and although Sūfīs such as al-Hujvīrī held that no Sūfī, not even those who had attained the highest degree of holiness, were exempt from the obligation of obeying the religious law, a tendency to decry religious observances nevertheless arose. 'The way' was divided into seven stages, of which the first was 'repentance' and the final stage 'Union with Reality'.

Sūfī brotherhoods, meanwhile, began to spread throughout the Islamic world. Their leaders were the object of respect both among the ruling classes and the masses. Sūfīs must not, however, be looked upon as forming a sect. Nicolson in the *Mystics of Islam* (p. 27) has pointed this out. 'The Sūfīs,' he writes, 'are not a sect, they have no dogmatic system, the *ṭarīqas* or paths by which they seek God "are in number as the souls of men" and vary infinitely, though a family likeness may be traced in them all.' On the other hand, strongly developed though the tendency to individualism may be, the Sūfī movement at the same time represents, to some extent, the desire of the common man, not only for individual communion with God, but also for personal leadership. Each *ṭarīqa* has its own leader or *murshid* whose authority

is absolute. Indeed, to quote Nicolson again (*Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 10) 'if anyone by means of asceticism and self-mortification shall have risen to an exalted degree of mystical experience, without having a *pīr* to whose authority and example he submits himself the Sūfis do not regard him as belonging to their community. In this way a continuous tradition of mystical doctrine is secured beginning with the Prophet and carried down through a series of dead *Pīrs* to the living director who forms the last link in the chain until he too dies and is succeeded by one of his pupils.'

To give a detailed history of Sūfism would take us too far afield, but it is not irrelevant to note in passing that from the eleventh century A.D. onwards it was largely through Sūfism that the vast mass of the people were brought into contact with the religious institution. In modern usage the term Sūfism covers a wide range of opinion and belief, ranging on the one hand from mysticism associated with great sanctity to a vague aspiration to spiritual life unaccompanied by the virtues and practices of piety on the other hand, or even to mere eccentricity. Broadly speaking Sūfism implies a particular connection with other Sūfis and a membership in however an attenuated and remote fashion with the general communion of Sūfis. This communion is not so much represented by the few scattered remnants of the great Sūfī orders which still exist in Persia today, but rather by the great body of Sūfī literature and tradition which has been handed down from the past.

The poems of Hāfiz consist mainly of *ghazals* (lyrics or sonnets) a few *qasīdas* (panegyric odes), two *masnavīs* (long poems in couplets), some occasional pieces and quatrains. The transcription of Hāfiz' poems probably goes back to the edition produced by his friend Muhammad Gulandām after the poet's death. There are wide variations in the MSS. which have come down to us. Professor Arberry has shown in his Introduction the difficulty in determining an authentic edition of the collected poems of the *divān*. He writes, 'the first and most fundamental problem attending the task of editing Hāfiz is to decide which of the poems attributed to him in the various manuscripts are genuine products of his pen. An indication of the complexity of the problem is provided by the following figures. The Calcutta 1791 edition contains 725 poems; Brockhaus printed 692; Pezhmān has 994 items, many of them marked as doubtful or definitely spurious. The editors

of MQ¹ have admitted 495 *ghazals* as unquestionably genuine, beside three *qasīdas*, two *mathnavis*, thirty-four occasional pieces (*muqatta'āt*) and forty-two *rubā'is*—a total of 573 poems. Their austere editorship causes a number of popular favourites (popular rather in India and Europe than in Persia) to disappear, perhaps the best known of them being the jingle *tāza ba-tāza nau ba-nau* which E. H. Palmer and Gertrude Bell made into pleasant English verses.

When the supposititious poems have been rejected, the next task is to determine what lines of each genuine poem are authentic for very many of them have been inflated in the manuscripts, sometimes by as much as four or five couplets. This labour accomplished, it yet remains to establish the correct order of the lines of each poem—there is sometimes the wildest variation in this respect between the manuscripts. Finally, and in many ways most troublesome of all, we have to settle the innumerable problems of verbal variants.

There are a number of different reasons for this wide inconsistency between the manuscripts. To consider the spurious poems first: the explanation of this phenomenon is fairly simple; no doubt the prevailing cause is the desire of the copyists at one stage or other of the transmission of the text to secure for their own inferior versifying an unmerited immortality by signing their products with Hāfiz' name. This is the conclusion reached by all scholars who have looked at the problem, and not only in connection with Hāfiz; for it is a very prevalent *malaise* of Persian literature. But it seems reasonable to suppose that this does not tell the whole story. It may well be, in the first place, that other poets, possibly in Hāfiz' lifetime even, used the same pen-name as the great master; and that lyrics by them, quite innocently confounded with the poems of the supreme Hāfiz, have been diligently incorporated into the *Divān*. Again, it is not an impossible conjecture that, just as painters of great eminence in Persia are known to have signed the work of their pupils after making a few masterly retouches, so a celebrated poet would add to his income by teaching the craft to promising aspirants and would permit their 'corrected' exercises to bear his name; he would be able during his lifetime to exclude such school specimens

¹The 1941 Tehran edition edited by Dr. Qāsim Ghanī and Mīrzā Muḥammad Qazvīnī.

from the canon, but if they survived into later times there would be nothing but consummate literary taste to distinguish them from the poet's own work; and literary taste declined lamentably in the generations that followed Hāfiz, if indeed it ever existed to any marked extent among professional copyists. Lastly we have perhaps to reckon with a third group of spuria: poems written by Hāfiz himself—juvenilia and such-like—but rejected by him in the fastidiousness of his mature judgement. It would interest the scribe who worked for pay, especially if he had in prospect a wealthy but ill-educated patron, by dint of drawing on all these subsidiary sources to impress and please his master with 'the largest and completest copy of Hāfiz' poems yet assembled'; and so the evil tradition of an inflated text, once securely founded, would continue into later times and ultimately gain the deceptive respectability of age.

The phenomenon of obtrusive lines calls for a rather different diagnosis. The chief causes of this blemish seem to be twofold. First, we may conjecture that men of parts, while reading a good and uninflated manuscript of Hāfiz, might amuse themselves by noting in the margin verses of other poets, in the same metre and rhyme, which seemed to them comparable and apposite; these annotations would of course be incorporated by a later scribe into the body of the text. Secondly, it is highly likely—and there are numerous passages in the *Divān* which lend support to this supposition—that a considerable number of these extra lines go back to Hāfiz himself, and represent stages in his workmanship.

Verbal variants have their own variety of causes. Primarily there is the well-known carelessness of scribes, and what is perhaps even more deplorable, their dishonesty; failing to understand a word or a phrase, they sometimes do not hesitate to bring their archetype within the range of their own limited comprehension. In the second place, these variants in many instances doubtless perpetuate the poet's first, second, third, or even fourth thoughts.¹

The origin of the art-form chosen by Hāfiz, to quote Professor Arberry again, 'is wrapped in the obscurity of age; it remains a fascinating problem for the researcher to discover what exact process of evolution led ultimately to the perfect type familiar to us in his poems. One theory points to the "erotic prelude" (*nasīb*) which forms a constituent part of the characteristic ode of ancient

¹Pp. 10-12.

Arabia, and suggests that in time this element was isolated into an independent unit, thus creating the *ghazal*. Alternatively it is argued that the *ghazal* is descended from some kind of lyrical poetry current in the courts of pre-Islamic Persia; but as no specimen of any such verse has been preserved, this conjecture, attractive as it is, cannot command unconditional consent. What seems tolerably certain is that this form of poetry was always associated with music, that in fact it was designed to be sung; and it is natural to suppose that this very circumstance to a great extent determined the shape of the verses. It would be dangerous to place too much reliance on the references in classical Persian poetry to the sung poem at the palace of the old Persian kings, such for instance as the well-known passage in the *Khusrau u Shirin* of Nizāmī where Bārbad is credited with composing to thirty varieties of melody whose names are given; but it would be equally dangerous to dismiss these references entirely as pure fiction. Perhaps we have in fact to deal here with multiple origins; the Persian *ghazal* may be a product of that cross-fertilization of Iranian genius by the imported culture of Arabia which produced so many remarkable manifestations of the human spirit. . . .¹

‘Hāfiz found in the *ghazal* a well-developed art-form; it had been an instrument of many famous poets, each of whom had contributed in his turn something towards its evolution. Limited by circumstances and tradition to a comparatively short length convenient for singing, it had begun its life as a poem of love and wine; the Sūfīs had exploited its libertine reputation in their quest for worldly shame, until the allegory had come finally to dominate the simple reality. This new treatment of the form, that must have seemed startlingly novel at first, was not long in fossilizing into a hard convention; the miraculous facility of Sa’dī’s style might well have rendered further development impossible. The problem Hāfiz faced was similar in its own way to that which confronted Beethoven—how to improve upon the apparently perfect and final; Hāfiz’ solution was no less brilliantly original than Beethoven’s.

‘Just as Beethoven’s earliest compositions strikingly resemble the mature Haydn, so Hāfiz, in his early period, is perfect Sa’dī. It is only natural to suppose that the young poet was captivated by the legend of the most famous singer Shīrāz had ever produced;

¹P. 22.

he must have been eager to learn every detail of his fame from the lips of those still living who had seen and heard him; to his youthful spirit it may well have seemed the acme of ambition to imitate his flawless style. Though his editor Gulandām, by following the tradition of arranging his poems alphabetically according to rhyme, destroyed all vestiges of a chronological sequence, it is still possible within certain limits to assign the *ghazals* to definite periods in the poet's life; further research will doubtless establish a more exact precision in this respect than we have yet achieved.

'The outstanding characteristic of the poems of Hāfiz' first period is that each deals with a single theme. This theme is elaborated to the poet's content and satisfaction; but he does not introduce—as he always did later—a second or a third theme to combine with the first; much less (as we find increasingly in the last period) does he make brief and fragmentary references to themes (for it was only after his fame had been established and his style become known that he could afford such refinements and be confident of remaining intelligible). A second point to note in the early poems is the complete absence of that distinctive philosophy which is the invariable accompaniment of his mature compositions: what may be epitomized as the doctrine of unreason, the poet's final answer to the inscrutability of fate, the utter incapacity of man to master the riddle of the universe. Thirdly, and as a natural corollary of the preceding point, we find in these products of early manhood very little of the Sūfī allegory—love in them is human love, wine is the red wine of the grape...

'Hāfiz' second or middle period is marked by two important developments, the one relating to "words" and the other to "meaning" (to borrow the terminology of the Persian critics). The poet has found the escape for which he had been looking to rescue him from the impasse of Sa'dī's technical perfection. Hitherto the *ghazal* had treated only one theme at a time, and had measured perfection in relation to the variations composed upon that single subject. In the works of many of the older poets (and Sa'dī himself is not wholly exempt from this fault), the interest and ingenuity of the variations tended often to overshadow the significance of the theme itself; as a result the poem would cease to be an artistic unity; it would grow longer and longer; and there would be little difficulty for the critic actually to improve upon the poet's performance by pruning away the luxuriance of

his imagination. Even in his younger days Hāfiz had always possessed too fine a critical sense to sacrifice unity on the altar of virtuosity; the new technique which he now invented depended wholly for success upon a rigid artistic discipline and an overwhelming feeling for shape and form.

'The development in "words" (or, as we should say, poetic technique) invented by Hāfiz was the wholly revolutionary idea that a *ghazal* may treat of two or more themes and yet retain its unity; the method he discovered might be described (to borrow a term from another art) as contrapuntal. The themes could be wholly unrelated to each other, even apparently incongruous; their alternating treatment would be designed to resolve the discords into a final satisfying harmony. As the poet acquired more and more experience of his new technique he was able to introduce further exciting innovations. It was not necessary to develop a theme to its logical conclusion at all; fragments of themes could be worked into the composition without damage to the resulting unity. It was the more easy to accomplish these experiments because convention had produced a regular repertory of themes—to which Hāfiz added a few of his own creation—and the audience would immediately recognize a familiar subject from the barest reference to it.'¹

It is this use of allusion, coupled with the special appeal which language as such has for the Persian, that makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the translator of Persian lyric poems to convey in English the appeal of the original. Gertrude Bell, who translated a number of Hāfiz' odes, recognized this when she wrote: 'I am very conscious that my appreciation of the poet is that of the western. Exactly on what grounds he is appreciated in the East is difficult to determine, and what his compatriots make of his teaching is perhaps impossible to understand.' The poetic quality of some of the translations of Hāfiz may be considerable—as indeed some of the examples in Professor Arberry's study show—but when it is remembered how profoundly the cultural background of the poet differs from that of his would-be interpreter, it will readily be understood that an English translation cannot hope to conjure up in the mind of the English reader the images and associations which are immediately evoked and recalled in the mind of the Persian as he reads the original. Moreover, since the unity of the *ghazal* depends largely on language and is to a high

¹ Pp. 28-31.

degree inspired by its art-form, this is inevitably lost in translation.

A further difficulty that confronts those not initiated into the mysteries of Sūfism is the use by Hāfiz of Sūfī terminology. How far this when used by Hāfiz has mystical content and how far it is used merely to serve an aesthetic purpose it is impossible to determine. It may be that Hāfiz himself was not always consistent in his use of language: that in some cases he used the symbolism of Sūfism to express genuine mystical experience, while in others he used it merely to serve an aesthetic purpose. The existence of two such seemingly contradictory tendencies in the poems of Hāfiz would not necessarily be incompatible with Persian character. In support of this conjecture it may be pointed out that in the odes written apparently for one or other of his patrons Hāfiz uses Sūfī symbolism; the language of these poems is in fact often indistinguishable from that of his other poems.

Professor Arberry, in an attempt to throw light upon the general question of the appeal of Hāfiz to his compatriots, quotes at length the opinion of two contemporary Persian scholars. One of these considers that 'Hāfiz' spiritual greatness and mental power proceeded from that mystical consciousness which in him attained perfection . . . In Hāfiz' hands the mystical lyric on the one hand reached the summit of eloquence and beauty and on the other manifested a simplicity all its own.' The second believes that Hāfiz' poems 'embrace and contain every beauty alike of language and meaning to be found in poetry, every quality of image and reality that exists in his speech,' and that he is 'the most eloquent and melodious writer of every age'. I would suggest, however, that the main reason for the popularity of Hāfiz among the Persian people is that he reflects the thought and spirit of the Sūfī brotherhoods, which played such an important part in the formation of the tradition and social background of the people. The appeal of his poems is, moreover, timeless. He tells to each the secrets of his heart. The reader can find in Hāfiz' odes a message appropriate to his own special condition at any given moment. Hāfiz is, indeed, known as 'the Tongue of the Hidden World', and a practice grew up and continues down to the present day of taking omens from the edition of the collected works of Hāfiz.

SELECTED NOTICE

CUBISM AND JUAN GRIS

DANIEL-HENRY KAHNWEILER's recent book on Gris has now appeared in an admirable translation¹ complete with everything that a conscientious reader could desire in the way of appendices, quotations from the painter's own writings, over a hundred illustrations (mercifully few in colour)—everything, in fact, short of a *catalogue raisonné*, on which the translator with characteristic thoroughness is at present engaged. Kahnweiler was personally and professionally associated with the painter throughout the greater part of his working life, from his tentative beginnings in the Rue Ravignan down to his tragic, early death in Boulogne. He has no message to put across except truth as he dimly perceives it. If the portrait, once sharply traced on the writer's mind, has become a little blurred with the passage of years, with the tricks that memory plays, this very blurring is the test of its authenticity. 'I cannot recall what Gris thought about this'; 'Gris never expressed himself on that subject in my hearing'—from such honest admissions of ignorance, we derive a more vivid impression of the painter than from the unbiased historian with his ready answer. This book may not be the last word on Gris, but it is about the most authoritative monograph on any twentieth-century painter. It is more even than that: it will serve as a primary source for a study of the Cubist movement which one day will be written, when distance has clarified its contours.

This movement was what was most necessary at the moment of its appearance, although at the time it seemed marginal to all but a handful of young men living in obscurity in Montmartre. It was not an intellectual exercise as some idiots have maintained, nor just one choice among many that might have been made, no arbitrary departure from normality, not merely a reaction against Fauve subjectivism. It turned the world topsy-turvy by a new tidal wave of feeling. People and trees, bottles and glasses suddenly took on new life in new shapes. I met a sculptor in Chicago once who had been a friend of Juan Gris, whose studio was furnished in Cubist drawings. He explained to me that if you lived in the company of these painters before the first war, it was impossible to conceive of the world taking any form but theirs. Men and women in the streets, Old Masters in the Louvre, were either ignored altogether or had to be squeezed to fit the difficult dogma. '*Ceux qui se moquent des nouveaux peintres*', wrote Apollinaire, '*se moquent de leur propre figure, car l'humanité de l'avenir se représentera l'humanité d'aujourd'hui d'après les représentations que les artistes de l'art le plus vivant, c'est-à-dire le plus nouveau, en auront laissées*', and not by the sinuous corpses that Sargent trailed in his wake, nor even by the casual face that water-lilies presented to ageing Impressionists. In this way the most isolated figures of a period become its most representative. The world *was* Cubist; and if we are prepared to accept the idea of its inevitability, it will not come as a surprise to us to discover from Kahnweiler's pages that Negro sculpture was so all-pervading an influence on the painters after all; that Picasso and Braque appear to have arrived at the same forms independently; that there is

¹ *Juan Gris: His Life and Work*. By Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler. Translated by Douglas Cooper. Lund Humphries. 52s. 6d.

no general agreement as to which of them painted the first Cubist picture; that by 1912 analogous forms had strayed to Moscow, Munich and Milan; and shortly afterwards invaded other arts and other countries; until finally the pattern on the wall-paper of villas on the outskirts of Colchester where the name of Picasso was anathema or unknown, swung into prim curves.

Cubism, then, responded to some need of the time that no one quite realized existed. This much we can understand. And but for a few gaps that still need filling, a few discrepancies in detail that sooner or later will have to be settled, we can follow the main course that Cubism pursued, once it had been firmly launched. The development of the movement from its analytical beginnings to the discovery of a synthesis is set out in Kahnweiler's introductory chapters, and indeed in Barr, in Dorival, in any decent text-book on this period of painting, for all to see, so clearly that there should be no cause to restate it. If we ask the question 'what happened?' we shall not hesitate long for an answer. America is bristling with professors from coast to coast with the dates at their fingertips. But as soon as we ask 'why?' a curtain drops before our eyes, blotting out truth. At present—I am encouraged by Kahnweiler to express uncertainty—we cannot understand the reason for this ruthless hacking-up of five centuries of seeing. The painters themselves cannot enlighten us: they are silent, or contradict themselves and each other too often. Nor is Kahnweiler capable of providing an adequate solution. He may with good reason draw our attention to Mallarmé juggling with words, to Seurat constructing an imaginary universe of harmony, to Cézanne's indestructible patch-work of colours, to the collapse of materialism in the field of science—but as their dealer, he identified himself too closely with the painters to see them as an historical incident, their personalities loomed too large in his mind; he had to fuss about keeping them alive, he could not step aside to probe for deeper causes. Today Cubism stands in the dangerous middle-distance, too near to slip comfortably into perspective, too far away to be relevant to our present crisis. And though it refuses resolutely to relapse into the status of a curiosity, it is no longer and not yet comprehensible to intelligent people, and for that reason in danger of remaining undeservedly shelved.

Against this background moves the sympathetic figure of Juan Gris, described by Kahnweiler in an affectionate passage as 'the purest of men, the most faithful and tender friend I have ever known, and one of the noblest artists ever born'. He stands in relation to Cubism rather as Sisley to Impressionism: the foreigner, breathing effortlessly the crisp air of Paris; the modest bearer of a truculent message; the group's most loyal disciple, betraying no inclination to break out of its aesthetic boundaries; a plodding figure, making the most of a little genius, arguing every inch of the ground. As we turn over the pages of illustrations, we cannot fail to be impressed by the restraint and forbearance that he habitually displayed, by his stubborn refusal to do anything but slowly, painfully evolve. He was not among the first Cubists. He took his time making up his mind, arriving a little late on the scene, at the crucial moment when his friends were in the process of transferring their allegiance from the object to the rectangle of canvas. Gris soon learnt to take his pictures as the starting-point, to leave the objects depicted in it to look after themselves. The grapes and the guitar, the chess-board and the playing-cards are permitted a corporate, but not

an independent, existence: they must live in association with one another or not at all. Out of the circles, quadrilaterals, crescents traced on his canvas, emerges almost by accident the semblance of a flower-vase, half buried behind some complementary shape—a pipe-stem, is it? A few notes of music, advertising a cacophonous tune? Yesterday's newspaper announcing some forgotten marriage? Or Thursday's? No matter. The objects have lost their significance in the general scheme. Rhythms have taken charge.

Subject-matter is at last free to be utterly trivial. From now onwards it can be chosen from the morning papers and a spent cigarette, from the odds and ends that accumulate on the café table in the course of an evening's heated discussion, and repeated over and over again in varying rhythms, without risk of monotony. The painter's traditional repertoire of objects is now found too intrusive to serve any further purpose. Friends and relations posing in armchairs display too readily on their features fleeting moods of pain and pleasure: Gris, if he turns to portraiture at all, temporarily transforms Cubism into a version of Neo-Classicism paralleled by Picasso's, or uses anonymous Pierrots and Harlequins who betray no feelings. Even landscape, dependent on transitory impressions, on association, on the play of wind and rain, cannot be sufficiently divested of its drama to be appropriated by the canvas: if it survives at all in the work of Gris, it survives in gaps between rectangular walls of houses, or in glimpses through the studio window, dwarfed by the guitar in the foreground. Every sensation has to be sacrificed to the sensation awakened by the harmony of the painted surface. This is why the juxtaposition by pasting of ready-made banalities, existing only on a two-dimensional plane and unaffected by atmosphere, which we call *collage*, proved so happy a solution; and why a few studio properties, tilted forward to reveal their regular grain or pattern, remained the only inexhaustible capital on which the painter was able to draw.

For Gris there was nothing outrageous in the employment of scissors and paste, no monstrous aberration in upsetting the laws of nature. On the contrary, Cubism imposed on him just that stern, exacting discipline that suited his submissive temperament. He used it as a call to order, as a long-term policy of consolidation, as an aid to self-effacement, never as an excuse for the display of virtuosity. Now and again he may cast wistful glances at Picasso's dazzling acrobatics, wishing that he also could turn his hand to anything that was required; but he knew full well that inventiveness was not his shining talent. He never felt at ease in the smart Balbec world of ballet-dancers and picturesque eccentrics, but sought refuge in Catalan villages, alone to puzzle out new shapes, to hold back for a little longer the floodgates of irrationalism. Once or twice the objects on the table may begin to totter, gather speed and whirl around their oval—but his restlessness is only temporary. A fresh canvas is placed upon the easel; and in a letter to Kahnweiler he announces that equilibrium has been restored. Europe may collapse around him but his pictures continue to stand up serene and indestructible, and this suffices to sustain him through troubled years. But the air was too rare for any but the most puritanical to breathe. Long before Gris died the floodgates had opened to release the *dérèglement de tous les sens*, and in place of his intransigent bowl of fruit, was set up a bowl of feathers tossed hither and thither by the wind. The heyday of the cultivated recluse was over.

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